The FAITH HEALER

by

WILLIAM VAUGHAN MOODY

PS2427
.F3

Sam Houston State College
ESTILL LIBRARY
Huntsville, Texas 77341

WITHDRAWN

PS2424
.F3

THE FAITH HEALER

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
NEW YORK · BOSTON · CHICAGO
ATLANTA · SAN FRANCISCO

MACMILLAN & CO., LIMITED
LONDON · BOMBAY · CALCUTTA
MELBOURNE

THE MACMILLAN CO. OF CANADA, LTD.
TORONTO

THE FAITH HEALER

A Play in Three Acts

BY

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY

AUTHOR OF "THE GREAT DIVIDE," ETC.

0211800618048 1

New York

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

1910

All rights reserved

Copyright, 1909, 1910,
By WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY.

Set up and electrotyped. Published March, 1910.

Norwood Press
J. S. Cushing Co. — Berwick & Smith Co.
Norwood, Mass., U.S.A.

PERSONS OF THE PLAY

ULRICH MICHAELIS
MATTHEW BEELER
MARY BEELER, *his wife*
MARTHA BEELER, *his sister*
ANNIE BEELER, *his daughter*
RHODA WILLIAMS, *Mrs. Beeler's niece*
DR. GEORGE LITTLEFIELD
REV. JOHN CULPEPPER
UNCLE ABE, *an old negro*
AN INDIAN BOY
A YOUNG MOTHER WITH HER BABY
VARIOUS SICK PEOPLE AND OTHERS ATTENDANT UPON THEM

ACT I

ACT I

A large old-fashioned room in Matthew Beeler's farm-house, near a small town in the Middle West. The room is used for dining and for general living purposes. It suggests, in architecture and furnishings, a past of considerable prosperity, which has now given place to more humble living. The house is, in fact, the ancestral home of Mr. Beeler's wife, Mary, born Beardsley, a family of the local farming aristocracy, now decayed. At the rear is a large double window, set in a broad alcove. To the right of the window is the entrance door, which opens upon the side yard, showing bushes, trees, and farm buildings.

In the right wall of the room a door and covered stairway lead to the upper story. Farther forward is a wall cupboard, and a door leading into the kitchen. Opposite this cupboard, in the left-hand wall of the room, is a mantelpiece and grate; farther back a double door, leading to a hall. Off the hall open two bedrooms (not seen), one belonging to Mr. and Mrs. Beeler, the other to Rhoda Williams, a niece of Mrs. Beeler, child of her dead sister.

The room contains, among other articles of furniture, a dining table (with detachable leaves to reduce its bulk when not in use for eating purposes), an invalid's wheel-chair, a low sofa of generous size, and a book-shelf, upon which are arranged the scientific books which Mr. Beeler takes a somewhat untutored but genuine delight in. Tacked upon the wall near by are portraits of scientific men, Darwin and Spencer conspicuous among them, cut from periodicals.

Other pictures, including family daguerreotypes and photographs, are variously distributed about the walls. Over the mantel shelf hangs a large map of the United States and Mexico, faded and fly-specked.

As the curtain rises, the room is dark, except for a dull fire in the grate. The ticking of the clock is heard; it strikes six. Martha Beeler, a woman of forty-five, enters from the kitchen, carrying a lighted lamp. She wears a shawl over her shoulders, a print dress, and a kitchen apron. She places the lamp on the table, which is set for breakfast, and puts coal on the grate, which soon flames more brightly. She goes into the hall and is heard knocking and calling.

MARTHA.

Rhody! Rhody!

Matthew Beeler, a man of fifty, enters. He is not quite dressed, but finishes as he comes in. Martha follows him.

Where's that niece of yours got to now?

BEELER.

She's helping Mary dress.

MARTHA.

What in time's Mary gettin' up for? She's only in the way till the work's done.

BEELER.

She's restless.

MARTHA.

Significantly.

I shouldn't wonder. *Pause.* I hope you know *why* Mary didn't sleep.

BEELER.

Evasively.

She's always been a light sleeper, since she got her stroke.

MARTHA.

Look here, Mat Beeler! I'm your born sister. Don't try to fool me! You know why your wife didn't sleep last night.

BEELER.

Maybe I do, Sis.

Points to the ceiling.

Is he up yet?

MARTHA.

Up! I don't believe he's been abed.

They listen, as to the tread of some one on the floor above.

Back and forth, like a tiger in a cage!

BEELER.

Shrugs.

Queer customer.

MARTHA.

Yes.

Imitates him.

"Queer customer," that's you. But come to doin' anything about it!

BEELER.

Give me time, Sis, give me time!

MARTHA.

How much time do you want? He's been in this house since Wednesday night, and this is Saturday morning.

BEELER.

Well, he's payin' his board, ain't he?

At window, rolls up curtain.

Goin' to have just such another day as yesterday. Never seen such a fog.

MARTHA.

Never seen such a fog, eh?

Comes nearer and speaks mysteriously.

Did you happen to notice how long that fog has been hangin' over this house?

BEELER.

How long? Why, since Thursday.

MARTHA.

No, sir, since Wednesday night.

BEELER.

Looking at her, astonished.

Martha Beeler! You don't mean to say — he *brought* the fog?

She flounces out without answering. He lights lantern, with dubious head-shaking, and holds it up before the print portraits.

Mornin', Mr. Darwin. Same to you, Mr. Spencer. Still keepin' things straight?

Grunts as he turns down his lantern, which is smoking.

I guess not very.

The hall door again opens, and Rhoda Williams, a girl of twenty, enters, with Annie Beeler, a child of ten. Rhoda is running, with Annie in laughing pursuit.

RHODA.

Taking refuge behind the table.

King's X!

ANNIE.

Catching her.

You didn't have your fingers crossed.

RHODA.

Turning Annie about, and beginning to button the child's long slip.

And you didn't have your dress buttoned.

ANNIE.

That doesn't count.

RHODA.

Yes, it does, before breakfast!

BEELER.

At the outer door.

How does your aunt strike you this morning?

RHODA.

Sobered.

She seems wonderfully better.

BEELER.

Better!

RHODA.

I don't mean her poor body. She's got past caring for that.

BEELER.

With sarcasm.

You mean in her mind, eh?

RHODA.

Yes, I mean better in her mind.

BEELER.

Because of what this fellow has been sayin' to her, I suppose.

RHODA.

Yes, because of that.

BEELER.

As he puts on an old fur cap.

An out-and-out fakir!

RHODA.

You don't know him.

BEELER.

I suppose you do, after forty-eight hours. What in the name of nonsense is he, anyway? And this deaf and dumb Indian boy he drags around with him. What's his part in the show?

RHODA.

I know very little about either of them. But I know Mr. Michaelis is not — what you say.

BEELER.

Well, he's a crank at the best of it. He's worked your aunt up now so's she can't sleep. You brought him here, and you've got to get rid of him.

Exit by outer door, with inarticulate grumblings, among which can be distinguished.

Hump! Ulrich Michaelis! There's a name for you.

ANNIE.

What's a fakir?

Rhoda does not answer.

Cousin Rho, what's a fakir?

RHODA.

Humoring her.

A man, way off on the other side of the world, in India, who does strange things.

ANNIE.

What kind of things?

RHODA.

Well, for instance, he throws a rope up in the air, right up in the empty air, with nothing for

it to catch on, and then — he — climbs — up — the — rope!

ANNIE.

Don't he fall?

Rhoda shakes her head in portentous negation.

Steps are heard descending the stairs. The child fidgets nervously.

ANNIE.

Listen! He's coming down!

RHODA.

Yes, he's coming down, right out of the blue sky.

ANNIE.

In a panic.

Let me go.

She breaks away and retreats to the hall door, watching the stair door open, and Ulrich Michaelis enter. Thereupon, with a glance of frightened curiosity, she flees. Michaelis is a man of twenty-eight or thirty, and his dark, emaciated face, wrinkled by sun and wind, looks older. His abundant hair is worn longer than common. His frame, though slight, is powerful, and his way of handling himself has the freedom and largeness which come from much open-air life. There is nevertheless something nervous and restless in his movements. He has a trick of handling things, putting them down only to take them up again immediately, before renouncing them for good. His face shows the effect of sleeplessness, and his gray flannel shirt and dark, coarse clothing are rumpled and neglected.

RHODA.

As he enters.

Good morning.

MICHAELIS.

Watching Annie's retreat.

Is — is that child afraid of me?

RHODA.

As she adds the finishing touches to the breakfast table.

Oh, Annie's a queer little body. She has her mother's nerves. And then she sees no one, living here on the back road. If this dreadful fog ever lifts, you'll see that, though we're quite near town, it's almost as if we were in the wilderness.

The stair door opens, and an Indian boy, about sixteen years old, enters. He is dressed in ordinary clothes; his dark skin, longish hair, and the noiseless tread of his moccasined feet, are the only suggestions of his race. He bows to Rhoda, who returns his salutation; then, with a glance at Michaelis, he goes out doors.

Rhoda nods toward the closing door.

It's really him Annie's afraid of. He's like a creature from another world, to her.

MICHAELIS.

Looks at her in an odd, startled way.

Another world?

RHODA.

Oh, you're used to his people. Your father was a missionary to the Indians, you told me.

MICHAELIS.

Yes.

RHODA.

Where?

MICHAELIS.

At Acoma.

RHODA.

Where is that?

MICHAELIS.

Standing near the wall map, touches it.

In New Mexico, by the map.

RHODA.

Comes nearer.

What is it like?

MICHAELIS.

It's — as you say — another world.

RHODA.

Describe it to me.

MICHAELIS.

I couldn't make you see it. It's — centuries and centuries from our time. — And since I came here, since I entered this house, it has seemed centuries away from my own life.

RHODA.

My life has seemed far off, too — my old life —

MICHAELIS.

What do you mean by your old life?

RHODA.

She breaks out impulsively.

I mean — I mean —. Three days ago I was like one dead! I walked and ate and did my daily tasks, but — I wondered sometimes why people didn't see that I was dead, and scream at me.

MICHAELIS.

It was three days ago that I first saw you.

RHODA.

Yes.

MICHAELIS.

Three nights ago, out there in the moonlit country.

RHODA.

Yes.

MICHAELIS.

You were unhappy, then?

RHODA.

The dead are not unhappy, and I was as one dead.

MICHAELIS.

Why was that?

RHODA.

I think we die more than once when things are too hard and too bitter.

MICHAELIS.

Have things here been hard and bitter?

RHODA.

No. All that was before I came here! But it had left me feeling —. The other night, as I walked through the streets of the town, the people seemed like ghosts to me, and I myself like a ghost.

MICHAELIS.

I cannot think of you as anything but glad and free.

RHODA.

When you met me on the road, and walked home with me, and said those few words, it was as if, all of a sudden, the dead dream was shattered, and I began once more to live.

Bell rings.

That is Aunt Mary's bell.

Rhoda goes out by the hall door, wheeling the invalid chair. Martha enters from the kitchen, carrying a steaming coffee-pot and a platter of smoking meat, which she places on the table. Michaelis bows to her.

MARTHA.

Snappishly.

Hope you slept well!

She goes to the outer door, rings the breakfast bell loudly, and exit to kitchen. Rhoda enters, wheeling Mrs. Beeler in an invalid chair. Mrs. Beeler is a woman of forty, slight of body, with hair just beginning to silver. Her face has the curious refinement which physical suffering sometimes brings. Annie lingers at the door, looking timidly at Michaelis, as he approaches Mrs. Beeler and takes her hand from the arm of the chair.

MICHAELIS.

You are better?

MRS. BEELER.

Speaks with low intensity.

Much, much better.

He puts her hand gently back on the chair arm. Martha enters with other dishes. She pours out coffee, putting a cup at each plate. Mr. Beeler has entered from the kitchen, and the boy from outside. Beeler, with a glance of annoyance at his wife and Michaelis, sits down at the head of the table. Rhoda pushes Mrs. Beeler's chair to the foot of the table and stands feeding her, eating her own breakfast meanwhile.

Michaelis sits at Mrs. Beeler's right, Martha opposite. At Mr. Beeler's right is the Indian boy, at his left Annie's vacant chair. Martha beckons to Annie to come to the table, but the child, eyeing the strangers, refuses, taking a chair behind her mother by the mantelpiece. Mrs. Beeler speaks after the meal has progressed for some time in silence.

MRS. BEELER.

Mat, you haven't said good morning to our guest.

BEELER.

Gruffly.

How are you?

He helps himself to meat and passes it to the others; the plate goes round the table. There is a constrained silence.

Annie tugs at Rhoda's skirt, and asks in dumb show to have her breakfast given her. Rhoda fills the child's plate, with which she retreats to her place by the mantel.

MRS. BEELER.

Why doesn't Annie come to the table?

She tries to look around. Rhoda whispers to Mrs. Beeler, who looks at her, puzzled.

Why doesn't Annie come?

RHODA.

She's afraid.

MRS. BEELER.

Afraid! What is she afraid of?

RHODA.

You know how shy she is, before strangers.

MRS. BEELER.

Annie, please come here! Annie!

The child refuses, pouting, and gazing at Michaelis.

RHODA.

I wouldn't urge her. She doesn't want to come.

MARTHA.

Trenchantly.

Don't blame her!

MRS. BEELER.

Gently reproving.

Martha!

MICHAELIS.

Holding out his hand to Annie.

Won't you come here, my child?

Annie approaches slowly, as if hypnotized.

You're not afraid of me, are you?

ANNIE.

Shyly.

Not if you won't climb up the rope.

MICHAELIS.

Puzzled.

Climb up what rope?

RHODA.

It's a story I was foolish enough to tell her. — Do eat something, Auntie.

MRS. BEELER.

I'll drink a little more tea.

Rhoda raises the cup to Mrs. Beeler's lips.

BEELER.

You can't live on tea, Mary.

MARTHA.

I guess she can live on tea better than on some things!

With a resentful glance at Michaelis.

Some things that some folks seem to live on, and expect other folks to live on.

Michaelis looks up from Annie, who has been whispering in his ear. Beeler nods at Martha in covert approval, as she takes up dishes and goes into the kitchen.

MRS. BEELER.

Leans forward across the table to Michaelis.

Don't mind my sister-in-law, Mr. Michaelis. It's her way. She means nothing by it.

BEELER.

Between gulps of coffee, as he finishes his meal.

Don't know as you've got any call to speak for Martha. She generally means what she says, and I guess she means it now. And what's more, I guess I do, too!

MRS. BEELER.

Beseechingly.

Mat!

BEELER.

Throws down his napkin and rises.

Very well. It's none of my business, I reckon, as long as it keeps within reason.

He puts on his cap and goes out through the kitchen.

ANNIE.

To Michaelis, continuing the whispered conversation.

And if you do climb up the rope, do you promise to come down.

MICHAELIS.

Yes, I promise to come down.

MRS. BEELER.

Leans over her plate. The others bow their heads.

Bless this food to our use, and this day to our strength and our salvation.

RHODA.

As they lift their heads.

Perhaps it will be light enough now without the lamp.

Michaelis, holding Annie's hand, rises, goes to the window, and rolls up the shades, while Rhoda extinguishes the lamp. The fog is still thick, and the light which enters is dull.

Rhoda unpins the napkin from her aunt's breast, and wheels her back from the table. The boy crouches down by the grate, Indian fashion. Annie looks at him with shy, half-frightened interest.

MRS. BEELER.

Gazing out, from where she sits reclining.

The blessed sun! I never thought to see it rise again so beautiful.

RHODA.

Looks at her aunt, puzzled and alarmed.

But, Auntie, there isn't any sun! It's —

She breaks off, seeing Michaelis place his finger on his lips as a signal for her to be silent. Mrs. Beeler turns to Rhoda, puzzled.

MRS. BEELER.

There isn't any sun? Why —

Rhoda pretends not to hear. Mrs. Beeler turns to Michaelis.

What does she mean by saying there is no sun?

MICHAELIS.

She means she doesn't see it.

MRS. BEELER.

Still puzzled.

But — you see it, don't you?

MICHAELIS.

I see the same sun that you see.

MRS. BEELER.

Looks again at Rhoda, then dismisses her wonderment, and looks out at the window dreamily.

Another day — and to-morrow the best of all the days of the year.

ANNIE.

What day is to-morrow?

She leaves Michaelis and comes to her mother's side.

What day is to-morrow?

MRS. BEELER.

With exultation in her voice.

My child, to-morrow is the most wonderful and the most beautiful day of all the year. The day when — all over the whole world — there is singing in the air, and everything rises into new life and happiness.

ANNIE.

Fretfully.

Mamma, I don't understand! What day is to-morrow?

MRS. BEELER.

To-morrow is Easter.

ANNIE.

With sudden interest.

Easter! Can I have some eggs to color?

MRS. BEELER.

Ask Aunt Martha.

ANNIE.

Singsong, as she skips out.

Eggs to color! Eggs to color!

Rhoda has meanwhile fetched a large tray from the cupboard and has been piling the dishes noiselessly upon it.

RHODA.

Shall I wheel you in, Aunt Mary?

MRS. BEELER.

Yes, please.

Rhoda wheels the chair toward the hall door, which Michaelis opens. Mrs. Beeler gazes at him as she passes.

Will you come in soon, and sit with me? There is so much that I want to hear.

MICHAELIS.

Whenever you are ready.

MRS. BEELER.

I will ring my bell.

As they go out, Martha bustles in, gathers up the dish tray and is about to depart, with a vindictive look. At the door she turns, and jerks her head toward the boy.

MARTHA.

Is it against the law to work where he comes from?

MICHAELIS.

Abstractedly.

What? — No.

MARTHA.

Then he might as well do me some chores. Not but right, payin' only half board.

MICHAELIS.

To the boy.

Do whatever she tells you.

The boy follows Martha out. Michaelis stands by the window in thought. As Rhoda reënters, he looks up. He speaks significantly, with suppressed excitement.

She saw the sun!

RHODA.

Poor dear Auntie!

MICHAELIS.

You pity her?

RHODA.

After an instant's silence, during which she ponders her reply.

I think I envy her.

She removes the cloth from the table, and begins deftly to put the room in order. Michaelis watches her with a kind of vague intentness.

MICHAELIS.

How long did you say she had been sick?

RHODA.

More than four years — nearly five.

MICHAELIS.

She has never walked in that time?

RHODA.

Shakes her head.

Nor used her right hand, either.

MICHAELIS.

With intensity.

Are you certain?

RHODA.

Surprised at his tone.

Yes — I haven't lived here long, but I am certain.

MICHAELIS.

She has tried medicine, doctors?

RHODA.

Uncle has spent everything he could earn on them. She has been three times to the mineral baths, once as far as Virginia.

MICHAELIS.

But never as far as Bethesda.

RHODA.

Bethesda? Where is that?

MICHAELIS.

The pool, which is called Bethesda, having five porches.

RHODA.

Oh, yes. The pool in the Bible, where once a year an angel troubled the waters, and the sick and the lame and the blind gathered, hoping to be healed.

MICHAELIS.

And whoever first, after the troubling of the waters, stepped in, he was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

RHODA.

If anybody could find the way there again, it would be Aunt Mary.

Pause.

And if anybody could show her the way it would be — you.

She goes on in a different tone, as if to escape from the embarrassment of her last speech.

Her saying just now she saw the sun. She often says things like that. Have you noticed?

MICHAELIS.

Yes.

RHODA.

With hesitation.

Her brother Seth — the one who died — has she told you about him?

MICHAELIS.

Yes.

RHODA.

What she thinks happens — since — he died?

Michaelis nods assent.

And yet in most other ways her mind is perfectly clear.

MICHAELIS.

Perhaps in this way it is clearer still.

RHODA.

Startled.

You mean — that maybe she really does — *see* her brother?

MICHAELIS.

It may be.

RHODA.

It would make the world a very different — a very strange place, if that *were* true.

MICHAELIS.

The world *is* a very strange place.

Pause.

RHODA.

Tell me a little about your life. That seems to have been very strange.

MICHAELIS.

Vaguely, as he seats himself by the table.

I don't know. I can hardly remember what my life was.

RHODA.

Why is that?

MICHAELIS.

Gazing at her.

Because, since I came into this house, I have seen the vision of another life.

RHODA.

With hesitation.

What — other life?

MICHAELIS.

Since my boyhood I have been —

He hesitates.

I have been a wanderer, almost a fugitive —. And I never knew it, till now — I never knew it till — I looked into your face!

RHODA.

Avoiding his gaze.

How should that make you know?

MICHAELIS.

Leans nearer.

All my life long I have walked in the light of something to come, some labor, some mission, I

have scarcely known what — but I have risen with it and lain down with it, and nothing else has existed for me. — Nothing, until — I lifted my eyes and you stood there. The stars looked down from their places, the earth wheeled on among the stars. Everything was as it had been, and nothing was as it had been; nor ever, ever can it be the same again.

RHODA.

In a low and agitated voice.

You must not say these things to me. You are — I am not —. You must not think of me so.

MICHAELIS.

I must think of you as I must.

Pause. Rhoda speaks in a lighter tone, as if to relieve the tension of their last words.

RHODA.

Tell me a little of your boyhood. — What was it like — that place where you lived?

MICHAELIS.

Becomes absorbed in his own mental pictures as he speaks.

A great table of stone, rising five hundred feet out of the endless waste of sand. A little

adobe house, halfway up the mesa, with the desert far below and the Indian village far above. A few peach trees, and a spring — a sacred spring, which the Indians worshipped in secret. A little chapel, which my father had built with his own hands. He often spent the night there, praying. And there, one night, he died. I found him in the morning, lying as if in quiet prayer before the altar.

RHODA.

After a moment's hush.

What did you do after your father died?

MICHAELIS.

I went away south, into the mountains, and got work on a sheep range. I was a shepherd for five years.

RHODA.

And since then?

MICHAELIS.

Hesitates.

Since then I have — wandered about, working here and there to earn enough to live on.

RHODA.

I understand well why men take up that life. I should love it myself.

MICHAELIS.

I didn't do it because I loved it.

RHODA.

Why, then?

MICHAELIS.

I was waiting my time.

RHODA.

In a low tone.

Your time — for what?

MICHAELIS.

To fulfil my life — my real life.

RHODA.

Your — real life?

He sits absorbed in thought without answering. Rhoda continues, after a long pause.

There in the mountains, when you were a shepherd — that was not your real life?

MICHAELIS.

It was the beginning of it.

RHODA.

With hesitation.

Won't you tell me a little about that time?

MICHAELIS.

In the fall I would drive the sheep south, through the great basin which sloped down into Mexico, and in the spring back again to the mountains.

RHODA.

Were you all alone?

MICHAELIS.

There were a few men on the ranges, but they were no more to me than the sheep — not so much.

RHODA.

Weren't you dreadfully lonely?

MICHAELIS.

No.

RHODA.

You hadn't even any books to read?

MICHAELIS.

Takes a book from his coat pocket.

I had this pocket Bible, that had been my father's. I read that sometimes. But always in a dream, without understanding, without remembering.

His excitement increases.

Yet there came a time when whole chapters started up in my mind, as plain as if the printed page were before me, and I understood it all, both the outer meaning and the inner.

RHODA.

And you didn't know what made the difference?

MICHAELIS.

Yes.

RHODA.

What was it?

MICHAELIS.

I can't tell you that.

RHODA.

Oh, yes!

MICHAELIS.

There are no words to tell of it.

RHODA.

Yet tell me. I need to know. Believe me, I need to know!

MICHAELIS.

Slowly, groping for his words.

It was one morning in the fourth spring. We were back in the mountains again. It was lambing time, and I had been up all night. Just before sunrise, I sat down on a rock to rest. Then — it came.

RHODA.

What came?

He does not answer.

You saw something?

He nods for yes.

What was it?

MICHAELIS.

Rises, lifting his arms, a prey to uncontrollable excitement.

The living Christ! — Standing before me on the mountain, amid the grazing sheep. — With these eyes and in this flesh, I saw Him.

Long pause.

RHODA.

In a low tone.

You had fallen asleep. It was a dream.

MICHAELIS.

Shakes his head in negation.

That wasn't all.

He turns away. She follows him, and speaks after a silence.

RHODA.

Tell me the rest. What happened to you, after — after what you saw — that morning in the mountains?

MICHAELIS.

Begins to talk slowly and reluctantly.

I lived straight ahead, with the sheep for two years.

RHODA.

Hesitating.

Did you ever *see* anything again?

MICHAELIS.

No. — But twice — I heard a voice.

RHODA.

What kind of a voice?

MICHAELIS.

The first time it came at night. I was walking on the top of the mountain, in a stony place. It — it was like a wind among the stones.

RHODA.

What did it say?

MICHAELIS.

It said, "Prepare! Prepare!"

RHODA.

And the second time?

MICHAELIS.

In the same place, at dawn. The voice said, "Go forth, it is finished!" I looked round me and saw nothing. Then it came again, like a wind among the stones, "Go forth, it is begun!"

RHODA.

And you obeyed?

MICHAELIS.

I found a man to take my place, and started north. Three days after, I climbed the mesa toward my old home. Above, in the pueblo, I heard the sound of tom-toms and wailing squaws. They told me that the young son of the chief lay dead in my father's chapel. I sat beside him all day and all night. Just before daylight —

He breaks off abruptly.

RHODA.

Go on!

MICHAELIS.

Just before daylight, when the other watchers were asleep, the power of the spirit came strong upon me. I bowed myself upon the boy's body, and prayed. My heart burned within me, for I felt his heart begin to beat! His eyes opened. I told him to arise, and he arose. He that was dead arose and was alive again!

Pause. Mrs. Beeler's bell rings. Michaelis starts, looks about him as if awakened from a dream, then slowly goes toward the hall door. Rhoda follows and detains him.

RHODA.

In a low tone.

How long had he lain — for dead?

MICHAELIS.

Three days.

RHODA.

With hesitation.

I have heard that people have lain as long as that in a trance, breathing so lightly that it could not be told, except by holding a glass before the face.

MICHAELIS.

Startled.

Is that true?

RHODA.

I have read so.

MICHAELIS.

I wonder — I wonder.

He stands in deep thought.

But I have had other signs.

RHODA.

What other signs?

MICHAELIS.

Many, many. Up and down the land!

Pause.

I wonder. — I — I almost wish it were so!

With bent head he goes out. Rhoda stands looking after him until the inner door closes, then sits before the fire in revery. Beeler comes in from the barn. He wears his old fur cap, and holds in one hand a bulky Sunday newspaper, in the other some battered harness, an awl, twine, and wax, which he deposits on the window seat. He lays the paper on the table, and unfolds from it a large colored print, which he holds up and looks at with relish.

BEELER.

These Sunday papers do get up fine supplements. I wouldn't take money for that picture.

RHODA.

Looks at it absently.

What does it mean?

BEELER.

Reads.

"Pan and the Pilgrim." Guess you never heard of Pan, did you?

RHODA.

Yes. One of the old heathen gods.

BEELER.

Call him heathen if you like! The folks that worshipped him thought he was orthodox, I guess.

He pins up the print, which represents a palmer of crusading times surprised in the midst of a forest by the god Pan.

RHODA.

What does the picture mean?

BEELER.

Well, Pan there, he was a kind of a nature god. The old Romans thought him out, to stand for a lot of things.

RHODA.

What kind of things?

BEELER.

Natural things, with plenty of sap and mischief in 'em. Growin' plants, and frisky animals, and young folks in love.

He points to the figure of Pan, then to the Pilgrim, as he talks.

There he sits playin' Jenny-come-kiss-me on his dod-gasted mouth-organ, when along comes one of them fellows out of a monastery, with religion on the brain. Pikin' for Jerusalem, to get a saint's toe-nail and a splinter of the true cross.

Martha enters from the kitchen and potters about the room "redding up."

Look at him! Do you think he'll ever get to Jerusalem? Not this trip! He hears the pipes o' Pan. He hears women callin' and fiddles squeakin' love-tunes in the woods. It'll take more than a monk's robe on his back and a shaved head on his shoulders to keep him

straight, I reckon. He'll call to mind that young fellows had blood in their veins when Adam was a farmer, and whoop-la! he'll be off to the county fair, to dance ring-around-a-rosy with Matildy Jane!

Pause, as he takes off his cap and lights his pipe.

Like to see our friend Michaelis meet up with Mr. Pan. Don't believe Michaelis ever looked cross-eyed at a girl.

He examines Rhoda quizzically.

You wouldn't make up bad as Matildy Jane yourself, Rho, but sufferin' Job, he can't tell the difference between crow's feet and dimples!

MARTHA.

Don't you be so sure!

BEELER.

Hello! Dan'el come to judgment! Never seen an old maid yet that couldn't squeeze a love story out of a flat-iron.

MARTHA.

I may be an old maid, and you may be an old wind-bag, but I've got eyes in my head.

To Rhoda.

Where did you meet up with him, anyway?

Rhoda, plunged in thought, does not answer.

BEELER.

Wake up, Rhody! Marthy asked you where you met up with our new boarder.

RHODA.

On the road, coming home from the village.

BEELER.

What made you bring him here?

RHODA.

He wanted a quiet place to stay, and this was the best I knew.

MARTHA.

Guess it was! — A snap for him.

She goes out by the hall door.

RHODA.

Rises, takes the lamp off the mantel, and during the following cleans and refills it.

BEELER.

As he takes off his coat, and hangs it up.

Rhody, ain't this religious business rather a new thing with you? Up there in St. Louis, didn't go in for it much up there, did you?

RHODA.

Looks at him quickly.

Why do you ask that?

BEELER.

Oh, I gathered, from things I heard, that you cared more about dancin' than about prayin', up there.

She turns away.

That young fellow that was so sweet on you in St. Louis year before last, he wa'n't much in the psalm-singin' line, was he?

RHODA.

Startled and pale.

Who told you about him?

BEELER.

Oh, Mary's friends, the Higginses, used to write us about your affairs. We thought it would be a hitch-up, sure as shootin'. Studyin' to be a doctor, wasn't he?

RHODA.

Uncle, please never speak to me about him again!

BEELER.

All right, all right, my girl. I've been young myself, and I know youth is touchy as a gumboil when it comes to love affairs. So it's all off, is it?

RHODA.

Yes.

BEELER.

Sits down to mend the harness.

If you're partial to the pill trade, we've got a brand new doctor in town now. Took old Doctor Martin's place. He'll be up here to see Mary in a day or two, and you can look him over.

RHODA.

What is his name?

BEELER.

Tries in vain to recall it.

Blamed if I can remember. Only seen him once. But I tell you, he's smart as tacks. Chuck full of Jamaica ginger. The very kind I'd have swore you'd take to, a while back, before you lost your fun and your spirit. When I first saw you on your father's farm out in Kan-

sas, you was as wild a little gypsy as I ever set eyes on. I said then to your dad, "There's a filly that'll need a good breakin'." I never thought I'd see you takin' up with these Gospel pedlers.

Martha comes in from the hall and fusses about, dusting, etc. She points in the direction of Mrs. Beeler's room.

MARTHA.

They're prayer-meetin' it again. And Mary lyin' there as if she saw the pearly gates openin' before her eyes.

BEELER.

Half to himself as he works.

Poor Mary! — Mary's a strange woman.

MARTHA.

To Rhoda.

Your mother was the same way, Rhody. The whole Beardsley tribe, for that matter. But Mary was the worst. It begun with Mary as soon as her brother Seth got drowned.

BEELER.

Looks up, angry.

None of that, Sis!

MARTHA.

I guess my tongue's my own.

BEELER.

No, it ain't. I won't have any more of that talk around me, do you hear? I put my foot down a year ago.

MARTHA.

Points to his foot derisively.

It's big enough and ugly enough, Heaven knows, but you can put it down as hard as you like, it won't keep a man's sperrit in his grave — not when he's a mind to come out!

BEELER.

Astonished.

Martha Beeler!

MARTHA.

That's my name.

She flounces out into the kitchen, covering her retreat with her last speech.

BEELER.

Looking after her.

My kingdom! Martha! I thought she had some horse sense left.

RHODA.

Slowly, as she finishes with the lamp.

Uncle, it's hard to live side by side with Aunt Mary and not —

BEELER.

In angry challenge.

And not what?

RHODA.

And not believe there's something more in these matters than "horse sense" will account for.

BEELER.

Hotly, as if a sore point has been touched upon.

There's nothing more than science will account for.

He points to a shelf of books.

You can read it up any day you like. Read that book yonder, chapter called Hallucinations. Pathological, that's what it is, pathological.

RHODA.

What does that mean?

Beeler taps his forehead significantly.

Uncle, you know that's not true!

BEELER.

Growls to himself.

Pathological, up and down.

Rhoda replaces the lamp on the mantel.
Martha opens the kitchen door and calls in.

MARTHA.

Here's Uncle Abe!

BEELER.

Uncle Abe? Thought he was a goner.

Uncle Abe enters. He is an old negro, with gray hair and thin, gray beard. He is somewhat bowed, and carries a stick, but he is not decrepit. His clothes are spattered with mud. Martha enters with him; she is stirring something in a bowl, and during the following continues to do so, though more and more interruptedly and absent-mindedly.

BEELER.

Hello, Uncle Abe.

UNCLE ABE.

Good-mawnin', Mista Beeler.

BEELER.

Where've you been all winter? Thought you'd gone up Salt River.

UNCLE ABE.

Shakes his head reassuringly.

Ain' nevah goin' up no Salt River, yo' Uncle Abe ain't.

BEELER.

Indicating Rhoda.

Make you acquainted with my wife's niece, Miss Williams.

Uncle Abe bows.

RHODA.

Pushing forward a chair.

Sit down, Uncle. I don't see how you found your way in this dreadful fog.

UNCLE ABE.

Fawg don' matta' nothin' to me, honey. Don' mean nothin' 'tall.

He speaks with exaltation and restrained excitement.

Yo' ol' Uncle keeps on tellin' 'em, dis hyah fawg an' darkness don' mean nothin' 'tall!

Rhoda and Martha look at him puzzled.
Beeler, busy over his harness, has not been struck by the old negro's words.

BEELER.

How's the ginseng crop this year?

UNCLE ABE.

They ain' no mo' gimsing!

BEELER.

No more ginseng? What do you mean?

UNCLE ABE.

De good Lawd, he ain' goin' fool roun' no mo' wif no gimsing!

BEELER.

Amused.

Why, I thought your ginseng bitters was His main holt.

UNCLE ABE.

With a touch of regret.

Use to be, Mars' Beeler. It shore use to be. — Yes, sah. Bless de Lawd!

Shakes his head in reminiscence.

He sartinly did set sto' by them thah bitters.

BEELER.

With lazy amusement.

So the Lord's gone back on ginseng now, has He?

UNCLE ABE.

Yes, sah.

BEELER.

What makes you think so?

UNCLE ABE.

Solemnly.

Roots all kill by de fros'!

His manner grows more and more mysterious; he half closes his eyes, as he goes on in a strange, mounting singsong.

Knowed it more'n a monf ago, fo' dis hyah blin' worl' lef' de plough in de ploughshare an' de ungroun' wheat betwixen de millstones, and went a-follerin' aftah dis hyah new star outen de Eas', like a bride follerin' aftah de bridegroom!

Martha taps her forehead significantly, and goes back to her batter.

BEELER.

New star, Uncle? Tell us about it. Sounds interesting.

UNCLE ABE.

Stares at each of them in turn.

Ain' you-all heerd?

BEELER.

You've got the advantage of us.

UNCLE ABE.

Ain' you-all heerd 'bout de Healer?

BEELER.

Healer? What kind of a healer?

UNCLE ABE.

With mounting indignation at Beeler's tone.

De Bible kin', dat's what kin'! De kin' what makes de lame fer to walk, and de blin' fer to see, an' de daid fer to riz up outen their daid col' graves. That's what kin'! Mean to say you-all ain' heerd nothin' 'bout him, you po' chillun o' dawkness?

Martha and Beeler look at each other in amazement. Rhoda sits looking at the old negro, white and tense with excitement.

BEELER.

Nope.

Recollecting.

Hold on!

MARTHA.

To Beeler.

Don't you remember, in the papers, two or three weeks ago? Where was it? Somewheres out West.

BEELER.

Believe I did read some such goin's-on. Don't pay much attention to such nonsense.

UNCLE ABE.

Solemn and threatening.

Tek keer, Mistah Beeler! Tek keer what you say 'fore dese here cloudy witnesses. Don' you go cuttin' yo'self off from de Kingdom. Nor you, Mis' Martha, nor you, honey. Don' ye do it! It's a-comin'. Yo' ol' Uncle Abe he's seen and heerd.

RHODA.

Tell us quickly what you mean!

UNCLE ABE.

Mean jes' what I says, honey. Night fo' last, de Healer, he come, like's if he jes' plum' drop from de sky.

More mysteriously.

An' whar's he gone to? You listen to yo' ol' Uncle Abe a-tellin' you. He ain' gone nowhars! He's jes' meechin' roun' in de fawg, a-waitin' fer de Lawd to call folks. En He's a-callin' 'em! He's a-callin' 'em by tens an' by hundreds. Town's full a'ready, honey. Main Street look jes' lak a fiel' hospital, down Souf durin' de wah!

MARTHA.

Meeting Beeler's astonished look.

What did I tell you? Maybe you'll listen to *me* next time.

RHODA.

To Uncle Abe, in a low, agitated voice.

This man you call the Healer — is he alone?

UNCLE ABE.

No, honey; folks says he don' nevah go nowheres by hisse'f. Always got that thah young man wif 'im what he raise from de daid.

BEELER.

Rises, with a shrug.

Good evening!

He crosses to the portraits of Darwin and Spencer.

You made quite a stir in your time, didn't you? Well, it's all up with you!

MARTHA.

In a voice strident with nervousness.

Raised from the dead?

UNCLE ABE.

That's what they says, Mis' Martha. Folks calls 'im Laz'rus in ref'ence to de Bible chil'

what riz up jes' same way lak', outen de daid col' tomb.

The Indian boy enters from the kitchen, his shoes and trousers spattered with mud. Uncle Abe looks at him, then at the others, and whispers to Rhoda. Martha bustles forward, hiding her agitation in scolding speech.

MARTHA.

Well, did you get my coffee and my sal-soda?

Lazarus points, without speaking, to the kitchen.

BEELER.

To Martha.

Did you send him to the store?

MARTHA.

Yes, I did send him to the store. If I had my way, I'd send him — further.

The boy hesitates, then goes stolidly out by the stair door. Uncle Abe lifts his arm ecstatically.

UNCLE ABE.

That's him! I tell ye that's the chil' what's said "Howdy" to the daid folks down yonder. I'se seen 'im in my dreams, an' now I'se seen 'im wif dese hyah two eyes. — O Lawd, bless dis hyah house o' grace!

BEELER.

I guess it's about time that fellow come out and exploded some of this tomfoolery.

He starts towards his wife's room.

RHODA.

Stopping him.

Please don't.

BEELER.

Peevishly.

There's got to be an end to this hoodoo business in my house.

Annie enters from the kitchen, dabbled with dye. She holds two colored eggs in her hands.

ANNIE.

Look! I've colored two.

MARTHA.

Good gracious, child. What a mess!

ANNIE.

Pa! Play crack with me! Just once, to see how it goes.

BEELER.

Go in and ask your mother if she'll let you.

Annie, her eggs in her apron, opens the hall door. About to pass out, she stops, drops the eggs with a scream, and runs back, gazing towards the hall as she takes refuge behind Rhoda's skirts.

ANNIE.

Pa! Auntie! Ma's walking!

Mrs. Beeler enters, walking uncertainly, her face full of intense exaltation. Michaelis comes just behind her, transfigured by spiritual excitement.

BEELER AND MARTHA.

Starting forward.

Mary!

RHODA.

Aunt Mary!

Mrs. Beeler advances into the room, reaching out her hand to Annie, who takes it in speechless fright. She bends over and kisses the child's head, then stretches out her other hand to her husband.

MRS. BEELER.

Mat, I'm cured! The Lord has heard our prayers, for His saint's sake.

BEELER.

Why, Mary, I can't believe this—it's too—it's not possible!

MRS. BEELER.

Looking at Michaelis.

It is written that he who has faith, even as a grain of mustard seed —. I have had faith.

MARTHA.

Law, you've had faith enough any time these five years, Mary. There was something else wanting, 'pears to me.

MRS. BEELER.

There was wanting the word of true belief, saying, "Suffer no more! Stoop and drink of the waters of mercy and healing."

Outside, the shrill soprano of a woman is heard, taking up a hymn. At the sound Michaelis goes to the window. He stands rigid, listening to the hymn to the end of the verse, when other voices join in the chorus. The fog has partially cleared.

MICHAELIS.

Turning slowly to Rhoda.

Who are they?

RHODA.

Sick people.

MICHAELIS.

How did they find out I was here?

RHODA.

It was known you were somewhere near. — They have been gathering for days. — They saw the boy, just now, in the village.

MRS. BEELER.

Comes a step or two nearer Michaelis.

Your great hour is at hand!

He looks distractedly about. The light has faded from his face, giving place to strong nervous agitation, resembling fear. He speaks as if to himself.

MICHAELIS.

My hour! — My hour! — And I — and I —!

He puts his hand over his eyes, as if to shut out some vision of dread.

MRS. BEELER.

You will not fail them? You cannot fail them, now.

Michaelis looks at Mrs. Beeler, then for a long time at Rhoda. He gathers himself together, and gazes steadfastly before him, as at some unseen presence.

No. — I have waited so long. I have had such deep assurances. — I must not fail. I must not fail.

CURTAIN

ACT II

ACT II

Late afternoon of the same day.

Mrs. Beeler sits in a low chair near the window. She has ceased reading the Testament, which lies open in her lap.

Uncle Abe sits on the floor with Annie. They are playing with building blocks, piling up and tearing down various ambitious structures. Rhoda enters from outside, with hat and cloak, carrying a large bunch of Easter lilies.

RHODA.

Kissing her aunt.

Still sitting up! You're not strong enough yet to do this. See, I've brought you some Easter lilies.

She hands one to Mrs. Beeler. As she takes off her things, she sees the old Negro gazing at her.

Well, Uncle Abe?

UNCLE ABE.

I's awake an' a-watchin', honey!

He turns again to the child, shaking his head as at some unspoken thought, while Rhoda arranges the flowers in a vase.

MRS. BEELER.

Rhoda!

RHODA.

Yes, Aunt Mary?

MRS. BEELER.

Come here.

Rhoda approaches. Mrs. Beeler speaks low, with suppressed excitement.

What is the news, outside?

RHODA.

You mustn't excite yourself. You must keep your strength.

MRS. BEELER.

I shall be strong enough. — Are the people still gathering from the town?

RHODA.

Yes, and they keep coming in from other places.

MRS. BEELER.

Are there many of them?

RHODA.

Many! Many! It's as if the whole world knew.

MRS. BEELER.

The more there are, the greater will be the witness. — *Pause.* When do you think he will go out to them?

RHODA.

They believe he is waiting for Easter morning.

Martha enters from kitchen, with bonnet and shawl on, and a large basket in her hand.

MARTHA.

Mary, you'd ought to be abed. You're tempting Providence.

She takes off her bonnet and shawl, and deposits the basket.

I saw your doctor down in the village, and he allowed he'd come up to see you this afternoon. He was all on end about your bein' able to walk.

RHODA.

I didn't know till to-day you had a doctor.

MRS. BEELER.

Yes. He's a young man who's just come here to build up a practice.

MARTHA.

To Rhoda.

You better finish packin' the basket. There's a lot o' hungry mouths to feed out yonder.

Exit by hall door. Rhoda continues the preparation of the basket, taking articles from the cupboard and packing

them. Annie has climbed on a chair by the picture of Pan and the Pilgrim. She points at the figure of Pan.

ANNIE.

Uncle Abe, tell me who that is.

UNCLE ABE.

Glancing at Mrs. Beeler and Rhoda.

H'sh!

ANNIE.

What's he doing up there in the bushes, blowing on that funny whistle?

UNCLE ABE.

Look hyah, chil', you jus' wastin' my time. I got frough wif dis hyah fool pictuh long 'go!

He tries to draw her away; she resists.

ANNIE.

Petulantly.

Uncle Abe! Who is it?

UNCLE ABE.

Whispers, makes big eyes.

That thah's Ole Nick, that's who that thah is! That thah's de Black Man!

Annie, terror-stricken, jumps down and retreats to her mother's chair. Mrs. Beeler rouses from her revery and strokes her child's head.

MRS. BEELER.

Oh, my child, how happy you are to see this while you are so young! You will never forget, will you, dear?

ANNIE.

Fidgeting.

Forget what?

MRS. BEELER.

Tell me that whatever happens to you in the world, you won't forget that once, when you were a little girl, you saw the heavens standing open, and felt that God was very near, and full of pity for His children.

ANNIE.

I don't know what you're talking about! I can't hardly breathe the way people are in this house.

MRS. BEELER.

You will understand, some day, what wonderful things your childish eyes looked on.

Annie retreats to Uncle Abe, who bends over the child and whispers in her ear. She grows amused, and begins to sway as to a tune, then chants.

ANNIE.

" Mary an' a' Martha's jus' gone along,
Mary an' a' Martha's jus' gone along,
Mary an' a' Martha's jus' gone along,
Ring dem charmin' bells."

As she finishes the rhyme she runs out into the hall. Mrs. Beeler begins again to read her Testament. The old negro approaches Mrs. Beeler and Rhoda, and speaks mysteriously.

UNCLE ABE.

That thah chil' she's talkin' sense. They's sumpin' ain't right about dis hyah house.

MRS. BEELER.

Not right? What do you mean?

UNCLE ABE.

Shakes his head dubiously.

Dunno, Mis' Beeler. I's jes' a ole fool colored pusson, been waitin' fer de great day what de 'Postle done promise. En hyah's de great day 'bout to dawn, an' de Lawd's Chosen 'bout to show Hisse'f in clouds o' glory 'fore de worl', an' lo 'n' behol' —

He leans closer and whispers.

de Lawd's Chosen One, he's done got a spell on 'im!

MRS. BEELER.

Shocked and startled.

Uncle Abe!

UNCLE ABE.

Pointing at the Pan and the Pilgrim.

Why do you keep that thah pictuh nail up thah fur?

MRS. BEELER.

My husband likes it.

UNCLE ABE.

Mighty funny kin' o' man, like to hev de Black Man lookin' pop-eyed at folks all day an' all night, puttin' de spell on folks!

MRS. BEELER.

That's not the Black Man.

UNCLE ABE.

That's him, shore's yo' born! Jes' what he looks like. I's seen 'im, more'n once.

RHODA.

Seen the Black Man, Uncle?

UNCLE ABE.

Yais, ma'am. I's spied 'im, sittin' in de paw-paw bushes in de springtime, when de snakes a-runnin', an' de jays a-hollerin', and de crick a-talkin' sassy to hisse'f.

He leans nearer, more mysteriously.

En what you s'pose I heerd him whis'lin', for all de worl' lak dem scan'lous bluejays?

Chants in a high, trilling voice.

"Chillun, chillun, they ain' no Gawd, they ain' no sin nor no jedgment, they's jes' springtime an' happy days, and folks carryin' on. Whar's yo' lil gal, Abe Johnson? Whar's yo' lil sweetheart gal?" An' me on'y got religion wintah befo', peekin' roun' pie-eyed, skeered good. En fo' you could say "De Lawd's my Shepherd," kerchunk goes de Black Man in de mud-puddle, change' into a big green bullfrog!

MRS. BEELER.

You just imagined all that.

UNCLE ABE.

Indignant.

Jes' 'magine! Don' I know de Devil when I sees him, near 'nough to say "Howdy"?

MRS. BEELER.

There isn't any Devil.

UNCLE ABE.

Astounded.

Ain't no Devil?

MRS. BEELER.

No.

Uncle Abe goes, with puzzled headshakings, towards the kitchen door. He stops to smell the Easter lilies, then raises his head and looks at her again, with puzzled scrutiny.

UNCLE ABE.

Mis' Beelah, did I understan' you to say — they ain' — no Devil?

MRS. BEELER.

Touching her breast.

Only here, Uncle Abe.

The old negro stares at her and Rhoda, and goes into the kitchen, feeling his own breast and shaking his head dubiously. Mrs. Beeler looks at the picture.

Do you think your Uncle Mat would mind if we took that picture down?

Rhoda unpins the picture from the wall, rolls it up, and lays it on the bookshelf. Her aunt goes on, hesitatingly.

Do you know, Rhoda, I have sometimes thought — You won't be hurt?

RHODA.

No.

MRS. BEELER.

I — I know what that old negro says is all foolishness, but — there *is* something the matter with Mr. Michaelis. Have you noticed?

RHODA.

Avoiding her aunt's gaze.

Yes.

MRS. BEELER.

Just when his great work is about to begin! — What do you think it can be?

RHODA.

How should I know, Aunt Mary?

MRS. BEELER.

I thought maybe — Rhoda, I have seen him look at you so strangely! Like — like the Pilgrim in the picture, when he hears that heathen creature playing on the pipe. — You are such a wild creature, or you used to be.

Rhoda comes to her aunt and stands a moment in silence.

RHODA.

Auntie.

MRS. BEELER.

Yes?

RHODA.

I think I ought to go away.

MRS. BEELER.

Astonished.

Go away? Why?

RHODA.

So as not to—hinder him.

MRS. BEELER.

Caressing her.

There, you have taken what I said too seriously. It was only a sick woman's imagination.

RHODA.

No, it was the truth. You see it, though you try not to. Even Uncle Abe sees it. Just when Mr. Michaelis most needs his strength, weakness has come upon him.

MRS. BEELER.

You mean—?

She hesitates.

You mean — because of you? — Rhoda, look at me.

Rhoda avoids her aunt's gaze; Mrs. Beeler draws down the girl's face and gazes at it.

Is there anything — that I don't know — between you and him?

RHODA.

I — I must go away. — I ought to have gone before.

MRS. BEELER.

My child, this — this troubles me very much. He is different from other men, and you — and you —

RHODA.

With passion.

Say it, say it! What am I?

MRS. BEELER.

Don't be hurt, Rhoda, but — you have a wild nature. You are like your father. I remember when he used to drive over to see sister Jane, with his keen face and eagle eyes, behind his span of wild colts, I used to tremble for my gentle sister. You are just like him, or you used to be.

Rhoda breaks away from her aunt, and takes her hat and cloak. Mrs. Beeler rises with perturbation, and crosses to detain her.

What are you going to do?

RHODA.

I am going away — I *must* go away.

Martha enters from the hall.

MRS. BEELER.

Speaks lower.

Promise me you won't! Promise me!

MARTHA.

To look at that, now! Seein' you on your feet, Mary, gives me a new start every time.

MRS. BEELER.

To Rhoda.

You promise?

Rhoda bows her head as in assent.

MARTHA.

Doctor's in the parlor. Shall I bring him in here?

MRS. BEELER.

No. I think I will rest awhile. He can come to my room.

She walks unsteadily. The others try to help her, but she motions them back.

No. It's so good to feel that I can walk alone!

MARTHA.

It does beat all!

MRS. BEELER.

I'll just lie down on the couch. I want to go out, before dark, and speak to the people.

Mr. Beeler enters from the kitchen and crosses to help his wife. The others give place to him.

Oh Mat, our good days are coming back! I shall be strong and well for you again.

BEELER.

Yes, Mary. There will be nothing to separate us any more.

MRS. BEELER.

Points at his books.

Not even — them?

He goes to the alcove, takes the books from the shelf, raises the lid of the window-seat, and throws them in.

Mrs. Beeler points to the pictures of Darwin and Spencer.

Nor them?

He unpins the pictures, lays them upon the heap of books, and returns to her.

You don't know how happy that makes me!

They go out by the hall door. Martha, as she lowers the lid of the window-seat, points derisively at the heap.

MARTHA.

That's a good riddance of bad rubbish!

She comes to the table and continues packing the basket.

You'd better help me with this basket. Them folks will starve to death, if the neighborhood round don't give 'em a bite to eat.

Rhoda fetches other articles from the cupboard.

I'd like to know what they think we are made of, with butter at twenty-five cents a pound and flour worth its weight in diamonds!

RHODA.

All the neighbors are helping, and none of them with our cause for thankfulness.

MARTHA.

That's no sign you should go plasterin' on that butter like you was a bricklayer tryin' to bust the contractor!

She takes the bread from Rhoda and scrapes the butter thin.

RHODA.

As the clock strikes five.

It's time for Aunt Mary to have her tea. Shall I make it?

MARTHA.

You make it! Not unless you want to lay her flat on her back again!

As she flounces out, Annie enters from the hall. She points with one hand at the retreating Martha, with the other toward her mother's room.

ANNIE.

Sings with sly emphasis.

"Mary an' a' Martha's jus' gone along,
Mary an' a' Martha's jus' gone along,
Mary an' a' Martha's jus' gone along,
Ring dem charmin' bells."

She climbs upon a chair by the table, and fingers the contents of basket as she sings.

RHODA.

What's got into you, little imp?

ANNIE.

Brazenly.

I've been peeping through mamma's keyhole.

RHODA.

That's not nice.

ANNIE.

I know it, but the minister's in there and Dr. Littlefield.

RHODA.

Startled.

Who?

ANNIE.

You know, mamma's doctor. — Oh, he's never come since you've been here.

RHODA.

In a changed voice, as she takes the child by the shoulders.

What does he look like?

ANNIE.

Don't, you're hurting me! — He's too red in the face, and looks kind of — insulting — and he wears the most *beautiful* neckties, and —

Exhausted by her efforts at description.

Oh, I don't know!

She sings as she climbs down, and goes out by the kitchen door.

"Free grace, undyin' love,
Free grace, undyin' love,
Free grace, undyin' love,
Ring dem lovely bells."

Dr. Littlefield enters from Mrs. Beeler's room. He speaks back to Beeler on the threshold.

LITTLEFIELD.

Don't bother! I'll find it.

Looking for something, he approaches Rhoda, who has her back turned.

Beg pardon. Have you seen a pocket thermometer I left here?

She faces him. He starts back in surprise.

Bless my soul and body! Rhoda Williams!

He closes the hall door, returns to her, and stands somewhat disconcerted.

Here, of all places!

RHODA.

Mrs. Beeler is my aunt.

LITTLEFIELD.

Well, well! The world is small. — Been here long?

RHODA.

Only a month.

LITTLEFIELD.

And before that?

RHODA.

It's a long story. Besides, you wouldn't understand.

LITTLEFIELD.

You might let me try. What in the world have you been doing all this time?

RHODA.

I have been searching for something.

LITTLEFIELD.

What was it?

RHODA.

My own lost self. My own — lost soul.

LITTLEFIELD.

Amused at her solemnity.

You're a queer bundle of goods. Always were. Head full of solemn notions about life, and at the same time, when it came to a lark, — Oh, I'm no grandmother, but when you got on your high horse — well!

He waves his hands expressively.

RHODA.

Bursts out.

The great town, the people, the noise, and the lights — after seventeen years of life on a dead prairie, where I'd hardly heard a laugh or seen a happy face! — All the same, the prairie had me still.

LITTLEFIELD.

You don't mean you went back to the farm?

RHODA.

I mean that the years I'd spent out there in that endless stretch of earth and sky —.

She breaks off, with a weary gesture.

There's no use going into that. You wouldn't understand.

LITTLEFIELD.

No, I walk on simple shoe leather and eat mere victuals. — Just the same, it wasn't square of you to clear out that way — vanish into air without a word or a sign.

RHODA.

Looking at him steadily.

You know very well why I went.

LITTLEFIELD.

Returning her gaze, unabashed, chants with meaning and relish.

"Hey diddle, diddle,
The cat and the fiddle,
The cow jumped over the moon."

Rhoda takes up the basket and goes toward the outer door. He intercepts her.

RHODA.

Let me pass.

LITTLEFIELD.

You're not taking part in this camp-meeting enthusiasm, are you?

RHODA.

Yes.

As he stares at her, his astonishment changes to amusement; he chuckles to himself, then bursts out laughing, as in humorous reminiscence.

LITTLEFIELD.

Bless my soul! And to think that only a couple of little years ago — Oh, *bless* my soul!

The stair door opens. Michaelis appears. His face is flushed, his hair disordered, and his whole person expresses a feverish and precarious exaltation.

MICHAELIS.

Looks at Littlefield with vague query, then at Rhoda.

Excuse me, I am very thirsty. I came down for a glass of water.

Rhoda goes to the kitchen door, where she turns. The doctor puts on a pair of nose-glasses and scans Michaelis with interest. He holds out his hand, which Michaelis takes.

LITTLEFIELD.

We ought to know each other. We're colleagues, in a way.

MICHAELIS.

Colleagues?

LITTLEFIELD.

In a way, yes. I'm a practising physician.

Exit Rhoda.

You seem to have the call on us professionals, to judge by the number of your clients out yonder.

He points out of the window.

To say nothing of Exhibit One!

He points to the hall door.

MICHAELIS.

Vaguely.

I — I don't know that I —

Rhoda enters from the kitchen, with water, which he takes.

Thank you.

He drinks thirstily. Mr. Beeler appears in the hall door; he looks at the group, taken aback.

BEELER.

Oh — !

LITTLEFIELD.

I stopped to chat with your niece. She and I happen to be old acquaintances.

BEELER.

You don't say? — Would you mind coming in here for a minute?

LITTLEFIELD.

Following him out.

What's up?

BEELER.

My wife's got it in her head that she's called upon to —

Door closes. Michaelis, who has followed Littlefield with his eyes, sets down the glass, and turns slowly to Rhoda.

MICHAELIS.

Who is that?

RHODA.

My aunt's doctor.

MICHAELIS.

You know him well?

RHODA.

Yes. — No.

MICHAELIS.

What does that mean?

RHODA.

I haven't seen him for nearly two years. — I can't remember much about the person I was, two years ago.

MICHAELIS.

Yes! Yes! I understand.

He turns away, lifting his hands, speaking half to himself.

That these lives of ours should be poured like a jelly, from one mould into another, until God Himself cannot remember what they were two years ago, or two hours ago!

RHODA.

Why do you say that?

He does not answer, but walks nervously about. Rhoda, watching him, speaks, after a silence.

Last month — out West — were there many people there?

MICHAELIS.

No. — Two or three.

RHODA.

The papers said —

MICHAELIS.

When the crowd began to gather, I — went away.

RHODA.

Why?

MICHAELIS.

My time had not come.

He has stopped before the map and stands gazing at it.

RHODA.

Has it come now?

She comes closer.

— Has your time come now?

MICHAELIS.

Yes.

RHODA.

How do you know?

MICHAELIS.

Points at the map.

It is written there!

RHODA.

How do you mean, written there?

MICHAELIS.

Can't you see it?

RHODA.

I see the map, nothing more.

MICHAELIS.

Points again, gazing fixedly.

It seems to me to be written in fire.

RHODA.

What seems written?

MICHAELIS.

What I have been doing, all these five years.

RHODA.

Since your work began?

MICHAELIS.

It has never begun. Many times I have thought, "Now," and some man or woman has risen up healed, and looked at me with eyes of prophecy.

But a Voice would cry, "On, on!" and I would go forward, driven by a force and a will not my own. — I didn't know what it all meant, but I know now.

He points at the map, his manner transformed with excitement and exaltation.

It is written there. It is written in letters of fire. My eyes are opened, and I see!

RHODA.

Following his gaze, then looking at him again, awed and bewildered.

What is it that you see?

MICHAELIS.

The cross!

RHODA.

I — I don't understand.

MICHAELIS.

All those places where the hand was lifted for a moment, and the power flowed into me —

He places his finger at various points on the map; these points lie in two transverse lines, between the Mississippi and the Pacific; one line runs roughly north and south, the other east and west.

Look! There was such a place, and there another, and there, and there. And there was one, and there, and there. — Do you see?

RHODA.

I see. — It makes a kind of cross.

MICHAELIS.

You see it too! And do you see what it means — this sign that my feet have marked across the length and breadth of a continent?

He begins again to pace the room.

— And that crowd of stricken souls out yonder, raised up as by miracle, their broken bodies crying to be healed, — do you see what they mean?

RHODA.

In a steady voice.

They mean what my aunt said this morning. They mean that your great hour has come.

MICHAELIS.

My hour! my hour!

He comes nearer, and speaks in a quieter tone.

I knew a young Indian once, a Hopi boy, who made songs and sang them to his people. One

evening we sat on the roof of the chief's house and asked him to sing. He shook his head, and went away in the starlight. The next morning, I found him among the rocks under the mesa, with an empty bottle by his side. — He never sang again! Drunkenness had taken him. He never sang again, or made another verse.

RHODA.

What has that to do with you? It's not — ? You don't mean that you — ?

MICHAELIS.

No. There is a stronger drink for such as I am!

RHODA.

Forcing herself to go on.

What — "stronger drink"?

MICHAELIS.

Wildly.

The wine of this world! The wine-bowl that crowns the feasting table of the children of this world.

RHODA.

What do you mean by — the wine of this world?

MICHAELIS.

You know that! Every woman knows.

He points out of the window, at the sky flushed with sunset color.

Out there, at this moment, in city and country, souls, thousands upon thousands of souls, are dashing in pieces the cup that holds the wine of heaven, the wine of God's shed blood, and lifting the cups of passion and of love, that crown the feasting table of the children of this earth! Look! The very sky is blood-red with the lifted cups. And we two are in the midst of them. Listen what I sing there, on the hills of light in the sunset: "Oh, how beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of my beloved!"

A song rises outside, loud and near at hand — Michaelis listens, his expression gradually changing from passionate excitement to brooding distress.

Vaguely, as the music grows fainter and dies away.

I — we were saying — .

He grasps her arm in nervous apprehension.

For God's sake, tell me. — Are there many people — waiting — out there?

RHODA.

Hundreds, if not thousands.

MICHAELIS.

Walks about.

Thousands. — Thousands of thousands! —

He stops beside her.

You won't leave me alone?

RHODA.

Hesitates, then speaks with decision.

No.

MICHAELIS.

Continuing his walk.

Thousands of thousands!

The hall door opens, Dr. Littlefield and a Clergyman, the Rev. John Culpepper, enter. The latter stares inquiringly from Michaelis to the Doctor, who nods affirmatively, and adjusts his glasses.

CULPEPPER.

Mutters to Littlefield.

Nonsense! Sacrilegious nonsense!

LITTLEFIELD.

Same tone.

I've done my best.

Behind them comes Mrs. Beeler, supported by her Husband. At the same moment Martha enters from the kitchen, with tea; Uncle Abe and Annie follow.

BEELER.

On the threshold.

Mary, take another minute to consider.

Mrs. Beeler, as if without hearing this protest, gazes at Michaelis, and advances into the room with a gesture of the arms which causes her supporter to loosen his hold, though he follows slightly behind, to render aid if necessary.

MRS. BEELER.

To Michaelis.

Tell me that I may go out, and stand before them for a testimony!

LITTLEFIELD.

As a physician, I must formally protest.

CULPEPPER.

And I as a minister of the Gospel.

MRS. BEELER.

To Michaelis, with a nervous, despairing gesture.

Speak to them! Explain to them! I am too weak.

There is a sound of excited voices outside, near at hand, then a sudden trample of footsteps at the entrance door. As Beeler goes hurriedly to the door it bursts open and a young woman with a baby in her arms crowds past him, and stands looking wildly about the room.

BEELER.

As he forces the others back.

You can't come in here, my friends! Stand back!

The woman gazes from one to another of the men. The old negro points at Michaelis. She advances to him, holding out the child.

MOTHER.

Don't let my baby die! For Christ's sake, don't let him die!

He examines the child's face, touches the mother's head tenderly, and signs to Rhoda to take them into the inner room.

MICHAELIS.

Take her with you, I will come.

RHODA.

With gentle urgency, to the woman.

Come with me.

She leads the woman out through the hall door.

MICHAELIS.

To Mrs. Beeler, as he points outside.

Tell them to wait until to-morrow at sunrise.

Mr. and Mrs. Beeler move toward the entrance door; some of the others start after, some linger, curious to know what will happen to the child. Michaelis turns upon them with a commanding gesture.

Go, all of you!

The room is cleared except for Littlefield, who goes last, stops in the doorway, closes the door, and approaches Michaelis. He speaks in a friendly and reasonable tone.

LITTLEFIELD.

You're on the wrong track, my friend.

MICHAELIS.

I asked you to go.

LITTLEFIELD.

I heard you. I want to say a word or two first. For your own sake and for that woman's sake, you'd better listen. You can't do anything for her baby.

MICHAELIS.

Is that for you to say?

LITTLEFIELD.

Yes, sir! It is most decidedly for me to say.

MICHAELIS.

By what authority?

LITTLEFIELD.

By the authority of medical knowledge. — You are a very remarkable man, with a very remarkable gift. In your own field, I take off my hat to you. If you knew yourself as science knows you, you might make the greatest doctor living. Your handling of Mrs. Beeler's case was masterly. But — come right down to it — *you* didn't work the cure.

MICHAELIS.

I know that.

LITTLEFIELD.

Who do you think did?

MICHAELIS.

Raising his hands.

He whom I serve, and whom you blaspheme!

LITTLEFIELD.

No, sir! He whom *I* serve, and whom *you* blaspheme — Nature. Or rather, Mrs. Beeler did it herself.

MICHAELIS.

Herself?

LITTLEFIELD.

You gave her a jog, so to speak, here, or here,

Touches his brain and heart.

and she did the rest. But you can't do the same to everybody. Above all, you can't do it to a baby in arms. There's nothing either here or here,

Touches brain and heart.

to get hold of. I'm a modest man, and as I say, in your own field you're a wonder. But in a case like this one —

He points to the hall door.

I'm worth a million of you.

MICHAELIS.

Moves as if to give place to him, with a challenging gesture toward the door.

Try!

LITTLEFIELD.

Shrugs.

Not much! The woman wouldn't listen to me. And if she did, and I failed — oh, I'm no miracle worker! — they'd make short work of me, out there.

He points out and adds significantly.

They're in no mood for failures, out there.

Michaelis's gaze, as if in spite of himself, goes to the window. He rests his hand on the table, to stop its trembling. Littlefield goes on, watching him with interest.

Nervously speaking, you are a high power machine. The dynamo that runs you is what is called "faith," "religious inspiration," or whatnot. It's a dynamo which nowadays easily gets out of order. Well, my friend, as a doctor, I warn you that your little dynamo is out of order. — In other words, you've lost your grip. You're in a funk.

Rhoda opens the hall door and looks anxiously at the two. Michaelis approaches her with averted eyes. As he is about to pass out, she speaks timidly.

RHODA.

Do you want me?

MICHAELIS.

In a toneless voice.

No.

She watches him until the inner door shuts. She and Littlefield confront each other in silence for a moment across the width of the room.

RHODA.

Forcing herself to speak calmly.

Please go.

LITTLEFIELD.

Drops his professional tone for one of cynical badinage.

You make up well as one of the Wise Virgins, whose lamps are trimmed and burning for the

bridegroom to pass by. I hope that personage won't disappoint you, nor the several hundred others, out yonder, whose lamps are trimmed and burning.

The outer door opens. Mrs. Beeler enters, supported by her husband, and accompanied by Martha and the Rev. Culpepper, with Uncle Abe following in the rear. Rhoda hastens to her aunt's side.

MRS. BEELER.

Ah, Rhoda, I wish you had been out there with me. Such beautiful human faces! Such poor, suffering, believing human faces, lit up by such a wonderful new hope!

She turns to the minister.

Wasn't it a wonderful thing to see?

CULPEPPER.

It is wonderful to see human nature so credulous. And to me, very painful.

MRS. BEELER.

To-morrow you will see how right these poor souls are to lift their trust so high. —

To Rhoda.

Where is he now?

Rhoda points in the direction of her own room.

How happy that young mother's heart will be to-night!

UNCLE ABE.

Solemnly.

Amen!

CULPEPPER.

In a dry tone.

We will hope so.

They move to the hall door, where Beeler resigns his wife to Rhoda. The two pass out.

Culpepper, Littlefield, and Beeler remain. During the following conversation, Martha lights the lamp, after directing Uncle Abe, by a gesture, to take the provision basket into the kitchen. He does so.

LITTLEFIELD.

Pointing through the window.

They're just laying siege to you, ain't they? I guess they won't let your man give them the slip, this time — even though you do let him run loose.

BEELER.

With severity.

You have seen my wife walk alone to-day, the first time in five years.

LITTLEFIELD.

I beg your pardon. I understand how you feel about it.

Martha goes out into the kitchen.

And even if it proves to be only temporary —

BEELER.

Temporary!

LITTLEFIELD.

Permanent, let us hope. Anyway, it's a very remarkable case. Astonishing. I've only known one just like it — personally, I mean.

BEELER.

Astounded.

Just like it?

LITTLEFIELD.

Well, pretty much. Happened in Chicago when I was an interne at St. Luke's.

BEELER.

Then it's not — there's nothing — peculiar about it?

LITTLEFIELD.

Yes, sir-ree! Mighty peculiar!

BEELER.

I mean nothing, as you might say, outside nature?

LITTLEFIELD.

O, bless you, you can't get outside nature nowadays!

Moves his hands in a wide circle.

Tight as a drum, no air-holes.— Devilish queer, though — pardon me, Mr. Culpepper — really amazing, the power of the mind over the body.

CULPEPPER.

Would you be good enough to let us hear some of your professional experiences?

LITTLEFIELD.

Lights a cigarette, as he leans on the edge of the table.

Don't have to go to professional medicine for cases. They're lying around loose. Why, when I was at Ann Arbor — in a fraternity initiation — we bared a chap's shoulders, showed him a white-hot poker, blindfolded him, told him to stand steady, and — touched him with a piece of ice. A piece of ice, I tell you! What happened? Damned if it — pardon me, Mr.

Culpepper — blessed if it didn't *burn* him — carries the scars to this day. Then there was that case in Denver. Ever hear about that? A young girl, nervous patient. Nails driven through the palms of her hands, — tenpenny nails, — under the hypnotic suggestion that she wasn't being hurt. Didn't leave a cicatrice as big as a bee sting! Fact!

BEELER.

You think my wife's case is like these?

LITTLEFIELD.

Precisely; with religious excitement to help out. *He points outside.*
They're getting ready for Kingdom-come over it, out yonder, dear Dr. Culpepper.

BEELER.

They're worked up enough, if that's all that's needed.

LITTLEFIELD.

Worked up! Elijah in a chariot of fire, distributing cure-alls as he mounts to glory. They've got their ascension robes on, especially the niggers.

CULPEPPER.

With severity.

I take it you are the late Dr. Martin's successor.

LITTLEFIELD.

I have the honor.

CULPEPPER.

Old Dr. Martin would never have taken a flippant tone in such a crisis.

LITTLEFIELD.

Flippant? By no means! A little light-headed. My profession is attacked. At its very roots, sir. —

With relish.

As far as that goes, I'm afraid yours is, too.

CULPEPPER.

To Beeler, ignoring the gibe.

Am I to understand that you countenance these proceedings?

BEELER.

Pointing to the invalid chair.

If your wife had spent five years helpless in that chair, I guess you'd countenance any proceedings that set her on her feet.

CULPEPPER.

Towers threateningly.

If your wife is the woman she was, she would rather sit helpless forever beside the Rock of Ages, than dance and flaunt herself in the house of idols!

BEELER.

With depreciating humor.

O, I guess she ain't doin' much flauntin' of herself in any house of idols. — You've heard Doctor here say it's all natural enough. Maybe this kind of cure is the coming thing.

LITTLEFIELD.

The Brother would drive us doctors into the poorhouse, if he could keep up the pace. And you preachers, too, as far as that goes. If he could keep up the pace! Well —

Sucks at his cigarette deliberately.

lucky for us, he *can't* keep it up.

BEELER.

Why can't he keep it up?

LITTLEFIELD.

Can't stand the strain. — Oh, I haven't seen him operate, but I'm willing to bet his miracles take it out of him!

CULPEPPER.

Takes his hat and goes toward the outer door.

Miracles, indeed!

LITTLEFIELD.

Following.

Oh, wait for me, Doctor; we're both in the same boat!

BEELER.

Hope you gentlemen will come back again to-night, and soon too. Don't know what'll happen if things go wrong in there.

Points towards the hall.

LITTLEFIELD.

All right — you can count on me —

BEELER.

To Culpepper.

And you?

CULPEPPER.

I seldom shirk my duty.

Beeler closes the door after them.

Martha enters from the kitchen, with a pan of dough, which she sets before the fire to raise.

BEELER.

You keepin' an eye out, Marthy?

MARTHA.

Guess your barn'd 'a' been afire, if I hadn't been keepin' an eye out.

BEELER.

I warned 'em about fire!

MARTHA.

Haymow ketched. If I hadn't been there to put it out, we'd 'a' been without a roof by now.

BEELER.

Guess I better go keep an eye out myself.

MARTHA.

Guess you had!

Beeler goes out by the kitchen. Martha takes up mechanically her eternal task of setting things to rights — gathering up Annie's toys and arranging the furniture in more precise order. Meanwhile, Rhoda enters from the hall with the mother of the sick child, a frail young woman of nervous type. She clings to Rhoda feverishly.

MOTHER.

Don't leave me!

RHODA.

You mustn't worry. Your baby will get well.

Rhoda sinks in a low easy chair before the fire, and the woman kneels beside her, her face hidden on the chair arm.

You must keep up your courage and your trust. That will help more than anything.

MOTHER.

I'm afraid!

RHODA.

Think of those others out there, who are waiting too, without the glimpse of comfort you've had.

MOTHER.

Bursts out.

I ain't had no comfort! When I heard him pray for my child, I — I don't know — I kept sayin' to myself — "O God, it's me that's stretchin' out my hands to you, not him. Don't punish me for his cold words!"

Martha, who has been listening, shakes her head significantly.

RHODA.

Cold words!

MOTHER.

Yes, I know it's wrong. I'll try to feel different. It's because I ain't had nothin' to do with religion for so long. — If my baby gets well, I'll make up for it. I'll make up for everything.

The woman rises. Rhoda kisses her.

RHODA.

I shall be here if you want me. And I shall — pray for you.

The mother goes out. Distant singing is heard. Martha comes to the mantelpiece with matches, which she arranges in the match tray. She looks at Rhoda, who sits with closed eyes.

MARTHA.

Guess you're about dead beat.

RHODA.

I think I never was so tired in my life.

MARTHA.

Worry does it, more'n work. Better try and doze off, Rhody.

The hall door opens, and Annie enters. She comes to Martha, and clings nervously to her skirts.

ANNIE.

Aunt Martha! I want to stay with you. You're the only person in this house that ain't different. What's the matter with Mamma?

MARTHA.

She's cured, I reckon.

ANNIE.

How did she get cured?

MARTHA.

You can search me!

ANNIE.

Did that man cure her?

MARTHA.

That's what she says, and I don't hear him denyin' it.

ANNIE.

Whining.

I don't want her to be cured!

MARTHA.

Annie Beeler! Don't want your mother to be cured?

ANNIE.

No, I don't. I want her to be like she always has been. She don't seem like my Mamma at all this way. What's the matter with all those people out there? Why don't we have any supper?

She bursts out crying and clings feverishly to Martha.

Oh, what's going to happen to us?

MARTHA.

There, Annie, don't cry.

She looks at Rhoda, throws a cover over her knees, and draws Annie away, speaking low.

Come out in the kitchen, and I'll give you your supper.

Exeunt. The singing grows louder and nearer. Michaelis enters from the hall. His hair is dishevelled, his collar open, his manner feverish and distraught. He looks closely at Rhoda, sees she is sleeping, then paces the floor nervously, gazing out of the window in the direction of the singing. At length he comes to Rhoda again, and bends over her, studying her face. She starts up, confused and terror-stricken, from her doze.

RHODA.

What — what is the matter? Oh, you frightened me so!

Michaelis turns away without answering.

What has happened? Why are you here?

MICHAELIS.

You had dropped asleep. You are weary.

RHODA.

Collecting her thoughts with difficulty.

I was dreaming — such a strange dream.

MICHAELIS.

What did you dream?

RHODA.

I thought it was morning; the sun had risen, and — and you were out there, in the midst of the crowd.

MICHAELIS.

Excitedly.

Go on! What happened?

RHODA.

I — I can't remember the rest.

MICHAELIS.

Grasps her arm, speaks low.

You must remember! Did I — succeed?

RHODA.

Helplessly.

I — it's all a blur in my mind.

MICHAELIS.

Darkly.

You don't want me to know that, in your dream, I failed.

RHODA.

No, no. That is not so.

Pause. She speaks with hesitation.

Perhaps this is not the time. Perhaps you are not ready.

MICHAELIS.

What does that matter? *He* is ready.

He points at the map.

RHODA.

Gazing at the map, with mystic conviction.

You will succeed! You must succeed!

He paces the room. She stops him, pointing toward the hall door.

How is the child?

He hesitates. She repeats the words anxiously.

How is the child?

He shakes his head gloomily for answer.

It will get well, I am sure.

MICHAELIS.

If it does not, I am judged.

RHODA.

Oh, don't say that or think it!

MICHAELIS.

I am weighed in the balance and found wanting!

RHODA.

You cannot hang the whole issue and meaning of your life upon so slight a thread.

MICHAELIS.

The whole issue and meaning of the world hang on threads as slight. If this one is slight. To the mother it is not slight, nor to the God who put into her eyes, as she looked at me, all the doubt and question of the suffering earth.

RHODA.

You must remember that it is only a little child. Its mind is not open. You cannot influence it —can you?

MICHAELIS.

Once that little life in my hand would have been as clay in the hands of the potter. If I cannot

help now, it is because my ministry has been taken from me and given to another, who will be strong where I am weak, and faithful where I am unfaithful.

Another song rises outside, distant.

RHODA.

Comes closer to him.

Tell me this. Speak plainly to me. Is it because of me that your weakness and unfaith have come upon you? Is it because of me?

MICHAELIS.

Looking at her steadily.

Yes.—

He comes nearer.

Before creation, beyond time, God not yet risen from His sleep, you stand and call to me, and I listen in a dream that I dreamed before Eden.

RHODA.

Shrinking from him.

You must not say such things to me.—You must not think of me so.—You must not!

He follows her, his passion mounting.

MICHAELIS.

All my life long I have known you, and fled from you. I have heard you singing on the hills of sleep and have fled from you into the waking day. I have seen you in the spring forest, dancing and throwing your webs of sunlight to snare me; on moonlit mountains, laughing and calling; in the streets of crowded cities, beckoning and disappearing in the crowd — and everywhere I have fled from you, holding above my head the sign of God's power in me, my gift and my mission. — What use? What use? It has crumbled, and I do not care!

RHODA.

Oh, don't speak such words, I beseech you. Let me go. This must not, shall not be!

She makes another attempt to escape. He presses upon her until she stands at bay.

MICHAELIS.

You are all that I have feared and shunned and missed on earth, and now I have you, the rest is as nothing.

He takes her, feebly resisting, into his arms.

I know a place out there, high in the great

mountains. Heaven-piercing walls of stone, a valley of trees and sweet water in the midst — grass and flowers, such flowers as you have never dreamed could grow. — There we will take our happiness. A year — a month — a day — what matter? We will make a lifetime of each hour!

RHODA.

Yielding to his embrace, whispers.

Don't talk. Don't think. Only — love me. A little while. A little while.

The deep hush of their embrace is broken by a cry from within. The young mother opens the hall door, in a distraction of terror and grief.

MOTHER.

Come here! Come quick!

Michaelis and Rhoda draw apart. He stares at the woman, as if not remembering who she is.

I can't rouse him! My baby's gone. Oh, my God, he's dead!

She disappears. Rhoda follows, drawing Michaelis, dazed and half resisting, with her. The room remains vacant for a short time, the stage held by distant singing. Beeler enters from the kitchen. There is a knock at the outer door, which he opens. Littlefield, Culpepper, and Uncle Abe enter.

LITTLEFIELD.

Your man hasn't vamoosed, has he? Uncle Abe here says he saw the Indian boy slipping by in the fog.

BEELER.

Turns to the negro inquiringly.

Alone?

UNCLE ABE.

Mumbles half to himself.

'Lone. 'Spec' he was alone. Didn't even have his own flesh and bones wif 'im!

BEELER.

What's that?

UNCLE ABE.

Holds up his right hand, which he eyes with superstitious interest.

Put dis hyar han' right frough him! — Shore's you're bo'n. Right plum' frough 'im whar he lives.

CULPEPPER.

Mediæval! Alsolutely mediæval!

LITTLEFIELD.

Not a bit of it. It's up to date, and a little more, too.

CULPEPPER.

I'm astonished that you take this situation flippantly.

LITTLEFIELD.

Not for a minute. My bread and butter are at stake.

Wickedly.

Yours too, you know.

Mrs. Beeler enters, alone, from the hall. She is in a state of vague alarm. Her husband hastens to help her.

MRS. BEELER.

What is it? What is the matter? I thought I heard —

She breaks off, as a murmur of voices rises outside. There is a sound of stumbling and crowding on the outer steps, and violent knocking. The outer door is forced open, and a crowd of excited people is about to pour into the room. Beeler, the Doctor, and the Preacher are able to force the crowd back only after several have made an entrance.

BEELER.

Keep back! You can't come in here.

As he pushes them roughly back, excited voices speak together.

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

Where is he? — They say he's gone away. We seen his boy makin' for the woods. — Oh, it's not true! Make him come out.

BEELER.

Curse you, keep back, I say!

Rhoda has entered from the hall, and Martha from the kitchen. The two women support Mrs. Beeler, who remains standing, the fear deepening in her face.

A VOICE.

On the outskirts of the crowd.

Where's he gone to?

BEELER.

He's here. In the next room. Keep back! Here he comes now.

Michaelis appears in the hall door. There is a low murmur of excitement, expectation, and awe among the people crowded in the entrance. Beeler crosses to help his wife, and the other men step to one side, leaving Michaelis to confront the crowd alone. Confused, half-whispered exclamations:

VOICES IN THE CROWD.

Hallelujah! Emmanuel!

A NEGRO.

Praise de Lamb.

A Woman.

Above the murmuring voices.

"He hath arisen, and His enemies are scattered."

Michaelis.

Who said that?

A woman, obscurely seen in the crowd, lifts her hands and cries again, this time in a voice ecstatic and piercing.

A Woman.

"The Lord hath arisen, and His enemies are scattered!"

Michaelis.

His enemies are scattered! Year after year I have heard His voice calling me — and year after year I have said, "Show me the way." And He showed me the way. He brought me to this house, and He raised up the believing multitude around me. But in that hour I failed Him, I failed Him. He has smitten me, as His enemies are smitten. — As a whirlwind He has scattered me and taken my strength from me forever.

He advances into the room, with a gesture backward through the open door.

In yonder room a child lies dead on its mother's knees, and the mother's eyes follow me with curses.

At the news of the child's death, Mrs. Beeler has sunk with a low moan into a chair, where she lies white and motionless. Michaelis turns to her.

And here lies one who rose at my call, and was as one risen; but now —

He breaks off, raises his hand to her, and speaks in a voice of pleading.

Arise, my sister!

She makes a feeble gesture of the left hand.

Rise up once more, I beseech you!

She attempts to rise, but falls back helpless.

BEELER.

Bending over her.

Can't you get up, Mother?

She shakes her head.

MICHAELIS.

Turning to the people.

Despair not, for another will come, and another and yet another, to show you the way. But as for me —

He sinks down by the table, and gazes before him, muttering in a tragic whisper.

Broken! Broken! Broken!

CURTAIN

ACT III

ACT III

The next morning, just before sunrise. Both door and windows are open, and a light breeze sways the curtains. Outside is a tree-shaded and vine-clad porch, with balustrade, beyond which is a tangle of flowering bushes and fruit trees in bloom. The effect is of a rich warm dawn — a sudden onset of summer weather after a bleak spring.

Beeler, with Uncle Abe looking on, is busy putting up the pictures which he has taken down in the preceding act. Martha enters from the hall.

BEELER.

To Martha.

Is Mary up?

MARTHA.

Yes. Wants to go out on the porch and watch the sun rise, same as she's done every Easter morning since Seth died.

BEELER.

Won't hurt her, I reckon, bad off as she is. — A reg'lar old-fashioned, sunshiny, blossomy spring mornin' — summer here with a jump and fine growin' weather.

Pause.

All the same, sun might as well stay in China this Easter!

MARTHA.

Is that why you're tackin' up them fool pictures again?

BEELER.

Yes, ma'am. That's just why. Religion!

MARTHA.

You wa'n't so sure yesterday, when you saw your wife stand up on her two dead feet and walk.

BEELER.

Well, she ain't walkin' now.

MARTHA.

No, she ain't, poor thing.

BEELER.

Natural cure, natural relapse. Doctor says the new medical books explain it.

MARTHA.

Give it a name, maybe!

BEELER.

Bursts out petulantly.

You women don't want things explained, any more'n Abe here! You prefer hocus-pocus. And nothin' will teach you. Take Rhody! Sees Michaelis flunk his job miserable. Sees Mary go down like a woman shot, hands and legs paralyzed again, — Doctor says, for good, this time. And what does the girl do about it? Spends the night out yonder laborin' with them benighted sick folks, tellin' 'em the healer will make good. Lots of makin' good he'll do!

He points at the ceiling.

A fine picture of a healer he makes.

MARTHA.

Looking up.

Still as a stone! I'd rather have him ragin' round same as yesterday, like a lion with the epizoötic.

BEELER.

He's a dead one. Rhody might as well give up tryin' to make folks think different.

MARTHA.

Maybe Rhody holds she's to blame.

BEELER.

To blame? To blame for what?

MARTHA.

For him a-peterin' out.

BEELER.

What's she got to do with it?

MARTHA.

Maybe she ain't got nothin' to do with it, and maybe she's got a whole lot.

BEELER.

Marthy, I don't want it to get out, but you're a plum' luny sentimental old maid fool!

Uncle Abe has been hovering, with superstitious interest, near the picture of Pan and the Pilgrim. With side glances at it, he speaks, taking advantage of the lull in conversation which follows Beeler's outburst.

UNCLE ABE.

Mistah Beelah, 'scuse me troublin' you, but— 'scuse me troublin' you.

BEELER.

What is it, Abe?

UNCLE ABE.

It's purty brash o' me to be askin', but—Mista Beelah, fur de Lawd's sake give me that thar devil—pictuh!

BEELER.

What do *you* want with it?

UNCLE ABE.

Want to hang it up in my ole cabin.

His tone rises to one of eager pleading.

Mars Beelah, you give it to me! For Gawd's sake, say Ole Uncle Abe kin have it, to hang up in his ole cabin.

BEELER.

Well, if you feel as strong as that about it, Abe, take it along.

UNCLE ABE.

As he unpins it with feverish eagerness.

Thank ye, Mistah Beelah, thank ye. I'll wo'k

fur ye and I'll slave fur ye, long as the worl' stan's. Maybe it ain't goin' to stan' much longer aftah all. Maybe de chariot's comin' down in de fiery clouds fo' great while. An' what'll yo' ole Uncle Abe be doin'? He'll be on his knees 'fore a big roarin' fire, singing hallelujah, an' a-jammin' red-hot needles right plum' frough dis heah black devil's breas' bone! I'se got him now! I'll fix'm.

Shakes his fist at the print, as he goes toward the kitchen.

Put yo' black spell on the Lawd's chosen, would ye? I'se got ye. I'll make ye sing, "Jesus, my ransom," right out'n yo' ugly black mouf!

Exit.

BEELER.

There's a purty exhibition for this present year o' grace! Thinks our friend Pan there has bewitched the healer.

MARTHA.

Maybe he has!

BEELER.

Thought you said Rhody done it.

MARTHA.

Same thing, I reckon, by all that you tell about that Panjandrum and his goin's on!

BEELER.

Nonsense!

MARTHA.

If you're so wise, why do *you* think Michaelis petered out?

BEELER.

Couldn't stand the strain. Bit off more'n he could chaw, in the healin' line. — Never looked at Rhody.

MARTHA.

Looked at her till he couldn't see nothin' else, in heaven or earth or the other place.

BEELER.

You're dead wrong. I tell you he never looked cross-eyed at Rhody, nor Rhody at him. Doctor's more in her line. — By the way, did you give the Doctor a snack to stay his stomach?

MARTHA.

Done nothin' but feed him all night long. Seems to be mighty exhaustin' work to tend a sick baby.

BEELER.

Does he think it'll live?

MARTHA.

Not likely. But he thinks he will, if fed reg'lar. — What do you call that trance the baby's in?

BEELER.

Doctor calls it comy. Spelled it out for me: c-o-m-a, comy.

Beeler goes out on the porch and disappears. Martha continues her task of tidying up the room. Michaelis enters from the stair, carrying his hat and a foot-traveller's knapsack. Martha regards him with curiosity, tempered now by feminine sympathy with the defeated.

MARTHA.

Good morning, sir.

MICHAELIS.

Tonelessly.

Good morning.

MARTHA.

Pointing at his hat and knapsack.

Hope you ain't off. Don't mind sayin' the way you acted was human decent, sendin' for Doctor when you found the baby wa'n't dead, an' you wa'n't no healer any more.

MICHAELIS.

Is it any better?

Martha makes a disconsolate gesture, implying that there is little or no hope. Michaelis turns away with bent head. Annie enters from the kitchen. Michaelis holds out his hand to her, and she takes it with shy hesitation.

MARTHA.

Guess you'd like to know where Rhody is, wouldn't you? She's where she's been all night, —out yonder with the sick folks.

MICHAELIS.

What is she doing there?

MARTHA.

Feedin' 'em, first off, an' then heart'nin' of 'em up. That's a purty hard job, I reckon; but it's the way o' women when they feel like she does.

Michaelis sinks in a chair, drawing Annie to him. Mrs. Beeler's bell rings; Martha goes out by the hall door. Annie watches his bent head in silence for a moment.

ANNIE.

Are you ever going up again, on the rope?

MICHAELIS.

Not remembering.

On the rope?

ANNIE.

You know . . . the magic rope. — Ain't you ever going to climb up in the sky again?

MICHAELIS.

Recollecting.

Never again, Annie. Never again.

ANNIE.

Have you got the rope still?

MICHAELIS.

No, I have lost it.

ANNIE.

Won't you ever find it?

MICHAELIS.

It can only be found by some one who will know how to use it better than I did.

ANNIE.

How better?

MICHAELIS.

By some one who can climb up, toward the sun and the stars, and yet never leave the earth, the cities, and the people.

ANNIE.

Then he'll have to take them up with him.

Michaelis nods for yes.

Gracious!

She runs to the porch door to meet Rhoda, who appears outside.

Cousin Rhoda! What do you think he says about the magic rope?

RHODA.

What, Annie?

ANNIE.

He says that first thing you know, everything will be going up in the air, towns and people and everything.

RHODA.

Does he?

ANNIE.

Runs out into the hall, balancing her arms above her head and gazing up laughingly.

Dear me! That will be very *tippy!*

Rhoda enters.

MICHAELIS.

You are here! The fear came over me, just now —

RHODA.

I could not go until I had told you the truth — about myself — about us.

MICHAELIS.

You will tell me the whole truth, and I will tell you the same. But that will be for later. Come! Come away with me, into the new life.

RHODA.

A life rooted in the failure of all that life has meant to you from the beginning!

MICHAELIS.

Until yesterday I did not know what my life was.

RHODA.

You do not know that, even yet. You know it now less than ever — what your life is, what it means to you, what it means to the world.

MICHAELIS.

To the world it can mean nothing. That is ended. But to us it can mean happiness. Let us make haste to gather it. Come!

RHODA.

Where do you want me to go?

MICHAELIS.

Anywhere — to that place I told you of — high in the great mountains.

RHODA.

I was there last night.

MICHAELIS.

In your thoughts?

RHODA.

I was there, and saw all the beauty of it, all the peace. But one thing was not there, and for lack of it, in a little while the beauty faded and the peace was gone.

MICHAELIS.

What was not there?

RHODA.

The work you have to do.

MICHAELIS.

That was a dream I could not realize. I have striven, and I have failed.

RHODA.

Do you know why you have failed?

MICHAELIS.

Yes.

RHODA.

Tell me why.

MICHAELIS.

Because I have loved you more than the visions that came to me in desert places, more than the powers that fell upon me at the bedside of the sick, more than the spirit hands and spirit voices that have guided me on my way.

RHODA.

What of the sick and suffering out yonder, who are waiting and hoping against hope? What of them?

MICHAELIS.

I cannot help them.

RHODA.

Once you dreamed you could.

MICHAELIS.

Yes. But that is over.

RHODA.

And who is to blame that that great dream is over?

MICHAELIS.

No one is to blame. It has happened so.

RHODA.

Doesn't it seem strange that the love of a woman entering into your heart should take away such a dream as that?

MICHAELIS.

I do not question. It is so.

RHODA.

But if your love had fallen, by some sad chance, upon a woman who was not worthy of love?

MICHAELIS.

What are you saying?

RHODA.

You know less than nothing of me. You have not asked me a single question about my life.

MICHAELIS.

There was no need.

RHODA.

There was need! There was need!

MICHAELIS.

Be careful what you say. Go on!

RHODA.

In the first hour of our meeting, and all the hours of the next day, you swept me along and lifted me above myself, like a strong mind. I didn't know what you were. I didn't know why I was happy and exalted. It was so long since I had been happy, and I had never been as happy as that, or anything like it. Then, yesterday morning, came the revelation of what you were, like a blinding light out of the sky! And while I stood dazed, trembling, I saw something descend upon you like a shadow. You loved me, and that love was dreadful to you. You thought it was so because I was a woman and stole your spirit's strength away. But it was not that. It was because I was a *wicked* woman.

MICHAELIS.

Why do you call yourself a wicked woman?

RHODA.

Because I am so.

MICHAELIS.

I cannot believe it.

RHODA.

It is true.

MICHAELIS.

Is that why you wanted to go away?

RHODA.

Yes, I tried to go away. You wouldn't let me go. Then I tried to tell you the truth. I knew why I took your strength away, and I had nerved myself to tell you why. But you began to speak — those wild words. I could not resist you. You took me in your arms; and all the power of your soul went from you, and your life went crashing down in darkness.

Long pause.

MICHAELIS.

Wicked? A wicked woman?

RHODA.

I was young then, wild-hearted, pitifully ignorant. I thought that love had come to me.

Girls are so eager for love. They snatch at the shadow of it. — That is what I did. — I am not trying to plead for myself. — Some things are not to be forgiven. — Somewhere in my nature there was a taint — a plague-spot. — If life is given me, I shall find it and root it out. I only ask for time to do that. But meanwhile I have done what I could. I have told you the truth. I have set you free. I have given you back your mission.

Dr. Littlefield enters, carrying his hat and medicine case. He looks sharply at Rhoda, then turns to Michaelis. His manner towards him is politely contemptuous, toward Rhoda it is full of covert passion, modified by his habitual cynicism and satire.

LITTLEFIELD.

To Rhoda.

Good morning.

To Michaelis.

Good morning, my friend. I understood that you sent for me, last night.

MICHAELIS.

I did.

LITTLEFIELD.

Glad to accommodate a fellow practitioner, even if he is in a side line. Some folks think your

way of business is a little shady, but Lord, if they knew the secrets of *our* charnel-house!

MICHAELIS.

How did you leave the child?

LITTLEFIELD.

Done for. I said I was worth a million of you in a case like this, but I didn't realize how far things had gone. The next time, call me in a little sooner.

He writes on his note pad, tears out a leaf, and lays it on the table.

Mrs. Beeler will continue the old prescription, alternating with this.

He puts the note pad in his pocket, and turns to Rhoda. He speaks in a tone which implies command, under the veil of request.

Will you walk a ways with me, Miss Williams?

RHODA.

Pale and trembling.

No.

LITTLEFIELD.

Pardon! I must have a short talk. It is important.

RHODA.

I cannot go with you.

LITTLEFIELD.

I think you had better reconsider.

MICHAELIS.

Astonished at his tone.

You have heard that she does not wish to go.

LITTLEFIELD.

Ignoring Michaelis.

I have no time to waste, and I shall not stop to mince my words. You are coming with me, and you are coming now.

MICHAELIS.

To Rhoda.

Who is this man?

LITTLEFIELD.

Wheeling upon him angrily.

'Pon my honor! "Who is this man?" "Remove the worm!" Decidedly tart, from a miracle-monger in a state of bankruptcy.

MICHAELIS.

To Rhoda.

Is this the man you told me of?

RHODA.

Steadily.

Yes.

LITTLEFIELD.

To Rhoda, as he eyes Michaelis with dislike.

So you have called in a father confessor, eh?

To Michaelis.

Well, since the lady can't keep her secrets to herself, this *is* the man. Very painful, no doubt, but these little things will happen.

To Rhoda.

I should have chosen a more secluded nook to say this in, but you're skittish, as I have learned to my cost, and likely to bolt. What I want to say is, *don't* bolt. It won't do you any good. — I've found you once, and I'll find you again, no matter what rabbit's hole you dodge into.

To Michaelis.

This ain't George Littlefield, M.D., talking now. It's the caveman of Borneo. He's got arms as long as rakes, and teeth that are a caution. — Look out for him!

MICHAELIS.

Holding himself in stern restraint.

Your arms and teeth are long enough, and eager enough to do damage, but they will not avail you here. This girl is in other keeping, and I dare to say, better.

LITTLEFIELD.

In other keeping, eh? Yours, I suppose.

MICHAELIS.

Yes, mine.

LITTLEFIELD.

Bless my soul!

He turns to Rhoda, pointedly ignoring Michaelis.

Look here, Rho, be sensible. I'm tired of this hole of a town already. We'll go west and renew our youth. Country's big, and nobody to meddle. You'll flourish like a green bay tree.

Rhoda turns distractedly, as to escape; he intercepts her.

Confound it, if you're so set on it, I'll marry you! Say yes, and let John the Baptist here give us his blessing. Speak up. Is it a go? —Till death us do part.

MICHAELIS.

Death has already parted you and her.

LITTLEFIELD.

So? I feel like a reasonably healthy corpse.

MICHAELIS.

There is no health in you. Every word you speak gives off corruption.

LITTLEFIELD.

Indeed! My advice to you is, make tracks for your starvation desert. A parcel of locoed Indians are about right for a busted prophet.

MICHAELIS.

What I am is no matter. What this girl is, though you lived a thousand years, you would never have the grace to imagine. She gave you her young love, in childish blindness, not knowing what she did, and you killed it idly, wantonly, as a beast tortures its frail victim, for sport. You find her again, still weak and bleeding from her wounds, and you fling her marriage, in words whose every syllable is an insult. Marriage! When every fibre of her nature must cry out against you, if she is woman. Take your words and your looks from her, and that instantly, or you will curse the

day you ever brought your evil presence into her life.

He advances upon him threateningly.

Instantly, I say, or by the wrath of God your wretched soul, if you have one, shall go this hour to its account!

LITTLEFIELD.

Backing toward the door, scared, but keeping his brazen tone.

All right. — I'm off. — Caveman for caveman, you've got the reach!

To Rhoda.

But remember, my lady, we're not quits by a jug-full. You'll hear from me yet.

MICHAELIS.

She shall never hear from you, nor of you.

LITTLEFIELD.

In the door.

Last call, old girl! — Women!

He goes out, slamming the door behind him. Long pause.

MICHAELIS.

Poor child! Poor child!

RHODA.

I am sorry that you have had to suffer this.

MICHAELIS.

It is you who have suffered.

Martha enters from the hall, wheeling Mrs. Beeler in the invalid chair. She lies lower than in the first act, her manner is weaker and more dejected. Rhoda, whose back is turned, goes on as the two women enter.

RHODA.

I deserve to suffer, but it will always be sweet to me that in my need you defended me, and gave me back my courage.

Michaelis goes to Mrs. Beeler; she gives him her left hand as at first.

MRS. BEELER.

My poor friend!

Martha, resigning the chair to Rhoda, goes out. Mrs. Beeler looks up at Rhoda anxiously.

What were you saying when I came in?

As Rhoda does not answer, she turns to Michaelis.

Something about your defending her.—Against what?

MICHAELIS.

Nothing. Her nature is its own defence.

MRS. BEELER.

Caressing her.

Ah, no! She needs help. She cannot bear it that this disaster has come, through her. It has made her morbid. She says things about herself, that make me tremble. Has she spoken to you — about herself?

MICHAELIS.

She has laid her heart bare to me.

MRS. BEELER.

That is good. Young people, when they are generous, always lay disaster at their own door.

She kisses Rhoda. The girl goes into the porch, where she lingers a moment, then disappears. Mrs. Beeler sinks back in her chair again, overtaken by despondency.

Isn't it strange that I should be lying here again, and all those poor people waking up into a new day that is no new day at all, but the old weary day they have known so long? Isn't it strange, and sad?

MICHAELIS.

I ask you not to lose hope.

MRS. BEELER.

Rousing from her dejection into vague excitement.

You ask me that? — Is there — any hope? Oh, don't deceive me — now! I couldn't bear it now! — Is there any hope?

MICHAELIS.

A half-hour ago I thought there was none. But now I say, have hope.

MRS. BEELER.

Eagerly.

Do you? Do you? Oh, I wonder — I wonder if that could be the meaning — ?

MICHAELIS.

The meaning — ?

MRS. BEELER.

Of something I felt, just now, as I sat there in my room by the open window.

MICHAELIS.

What was it?

MRS. BEELER.

I — I don't know how to describe it. — It was like a new sweetness in the air.

She looks out at the open window, where the spring breeze lightly wafts the curtains.

MICHAELIS.

The lilacs have opened during the night.

MRS. BEELER.

It was not the lilacs. — I get it now again, in this room.

She looks toward the lilies and shakes her head.

No, it is not the lilies either. If it were anyone else, I should be ashamed to say what I think.

She draws him down and speaks mysteriously.

It is not real flowers at all!

Song rises outside — faint and distant.

MICHAELIS.

What is it to you?

MRS. BEELER.

It is like — it is like some kindness in the air, some new-born happiness — or a new hope rising. Now you will think I am — not quite right in my mind, as Mat does, and Martha!

MICHAELIS.

Mrs. Beeler, there is such a perfume about us this beautiful Easter morning. You perceive it, with senses which suffering and a pure soul have made fine beyond the measure of woman. There is a kindness in the air, new-born happiness, and new-risen hope.

MRS. BEELER.

From whose heart does it rise?

MICHAELIS.

From mine, from Rhoda's heart, though she knows it not, from yours, and soon, by God's mercy, from the heart of this waiting multitude.

The song, though still distant, grows louder.

Mrs. Beeler turns to Michaelis and gazes intently into his face.

MRS. BEELER.

The light has come into your face again! You are — you are — Oh, my brother, what has come to you?

MICHAELIS.

I have shaken off my burden. Do you shake off yours. What is pain but a kind of selfishness? What is disease but a kind of sin?

Lay your suffering and your sickness from you as an out-worn garment. Rise up! It is Easter morning. One comes, needing you. Rise up and welcome her!

Mrs. Beeler rises and goes to meet Rhoda, entering from the porch.

RHODA.

Aunt Mary! You are walking again!

MRS. BEELER.

He told me to arise, and once more my dead limbs heard.

RHODA.

God in His mercy be thanked!

MRS. BEELER.

I rose without knowing what I did. It was as if a wind lifted me.

RHODA.

Yes, yes. For good, this time!

MRS. BEELER.

So different from yesterday. I was still weak then, and my limbs were heavy. Now I feel as if wings were on my shoulders.

She looks toward the outer door, and listens to the singing, now risen to a more joyful strain.

I must go out to them.

She turns to Michaelis.

Say that I may go out, and give them the good tidings of great joy.

MICHAELIS.

May the Lord be with you as you go!

To Rhoda, who starts to help her aunt.

Alone!

MRS. BEELER.

Yes, alone. I want to go alone.

She takes a lily from the vase, and lifting it above her head, goes out through the porch, which is now flooded with sunshine.

As she goes out she says:

The Easter sun has risen, with healing in its wings!

She crosses the porch and disappears.

RHODA.

I felt something dragging me back. It was Aunt Mary's spirit.

MICHAELIS.

No, it was mine.

RHODA.

Yours?

MICHAELIS.

My spirit, crying to you that I was delivered.

RHODA.

I delivered you. That is enough happiness for one life.

MICHAELIS.

You delivered me, yes. But not as you dream. Yesterday when the multitude began to gather, the thing I had been waiting for all my life was there, and I — because of you — I was not ready. In that blind hour my life sank in ruin. — I had thought love denied to such as had my work to do, and in the darkness of that thought disaster overwhelmed me. — I have come to know that God does not deny love to any of his children, but gives it as a beautiful and simple gift to them all. — Upon each head be the use that is made of it!

RHODA.

It is not I — who — harm you?

MICHAELIS.

It is you who bless me, and give me back the strength that I had lost.

RHODA.

I?

MICHAELIS.

A little while ago you told me your life's bitter story. I tasted your struggle, went down with you into the depths of your anguish, and in those depths, — the miracle! Behold, once more the stars looked down upon me from their places, and I stood wondering as a child wonders. Out of those depths arose new-born happiness and new-risen hope. For in those star-lit depths of pain and grief, I had found at last true love. You needed me. You needed all the powers I had thrown away for your sake. You needed what the whole world needs — healing, healing, and as I rose to meet that need, the power that I had lost poured back into my soul.

RHODA.

Oh, if I thought that could be!

MICHAELIS.

By the mystery that is man, and the mercy that is God, I say it is so. —

Puts his hand on her head, and gazes into her face.

I looked into your eyes once, and they were terrible as an army with banners. I look again now, and I see they are only a girl's eyes, very weak, very pitiful. I told you of a place, high in the great mountains. I tell you now of another place higher yet, in more mysterious mountains. Let us go there together, step by step, from faith to faith, and from strength to strength, for I see depths of life open and heights of love come out, which I never dreamed of till now!

A song rises outside, nearer and louder than before.

RHODA.

Against your own words they trust you still.

MICHAELIS.

It was you who held them to their trust!

RHODA.

You will go out to them now.

MICHAELIS.

As he kisses her.

Until the victory!

The song rises to a great hymn, of martial and joyous rhythm. They go together to the threshold. They look at each other in silence. Rhoda speaks, with suppressed meaning.

RHODA.

Shall it be — on earth?

MICHAELIS.

On the good human earth, which I never possessed till now!

RHODA.

But now — these waiting souls, prisoned in their pain —

MICHAELIS.

By faith all prisoned souls shall be delivered.

RHODA.

By faith.

MICHAELIS.

By faith which makes all things possible, which brings all things to pass.

He disappears. Rhoda stands looking after him. The young mother hurries in.

THE YOUNG MOTHER.

Ecstatic, breathless.

Come here — My baby! I believe — I do believe —

She disappears.

RHODA.

Following her.

I believe. I do believe!

The music rises into a vast chorus of many mingled strains.

CURTAIN

WILLIAM VAUGHN MOODY'S

The Great Divide

Cloth, 12mo, $1.25 net

"This play stands as a noteworthy achievement in the history of American dramatic literature, not alone as a drama of absorbing interest and significance, but as a distinct achievement from a literary point of view. It is a pleasure to read the crisp, admirable English, a prose at once vigorous, clear, and balanced. In the cold black and white of print and paper, without the accessories of the stage or the personality of actors to help illusion or enforce the story told, the real strength of the drama is most impressive. Mr. Moody has long been known as a poet of unusual gifts; he has now proven himself a dramatist of marked ability." — *Brooklyn Daily Eagle.*

"It is a privilege to read at leisure and to examine in detail a play which, when presented upon the boards, sweeps the auditor along in a whirlwind of emotion. . . . The triumph of nature, with its impulse, its health, its essential sanity and rightness, over the cryptic formulas of convention and Puritanism, marks the meaning of the play. . . . Yet because it is a great drama, it may mean that to one and quite another thing to another, but meaning this, or meaning that, it must make, inevitably, an indelible impression upon any one interested in the vitality and evolution of the American drama." — *Chicago Tribune.*

"This play is in a class by itself because it has high literary merit aside from great dramatic force. The poet flashes out frequently in the terse lines of the early part of the play, and later reaches high-water mark in the scenes at Stephen Ghent's home on the mountain top. The play is worth many readings."
— *San Francisco Chronicle.*

PUBLISHED BY

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

64–66 Fifth Avenue, New York

A LIST OF PLAYS

BY WINSTON CHURCHILL

The Title-Mart *75 cents net*

A comedy of American Society, wherein love and the young folks go their way in spite of their elders and ambition.

BY CLYDE FITCH

The Climbers *75 cents net*

The Girl with the Green Eyes *75 cents net*

Her Own Way *75 cents net*

The Stubbornness of Geraldine *75 cents net*

The Truth *75 cents net*

Ingenious satires on modern society, unhackneyed in incident, piquant in humor, showing minute observation happily used. Each is bound in cloth, with white paper label.

BY THOMAS HARDY

The Dynasts: a Drama of the Napoleonic Wars *In Three Parts* *Each $1.50 net*

BY LAURENCE HOUSMAN

Bethlehem: A Musical Nativity Play *$1.25 net*

BY HENRY ARTHUR JONES

Mrs. Dane's Defence *75 cents net*

Michael and His Lost Angel *75 cents net*

Rebellious Susan *75 cents net*

Saints and Sinners *75 cents net*

PUBLISHED BY

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

64-66 Fifth Avenue, New York

By HENRY ARTHUR JONES (*Continued*)

The Crusaders	*75 cents net*
The Infidel	*75 cents net*
The Tempter	*75 cents net*
The Whitewashing of Julia	*75 cents net*

Each of these well-known plays is bound in cloth, with white paper label.

By JACK LONDON

Scorn of Women	*Cloth, $1.25 net*

The scenes are laid in the far north, Mr. London's special province.

By PERCY MACKAYE

The Canterbury Pilgrims	*$1.25 net*
Fenris the Wolf. A Tragedy	*$1.25 net*
Jeanne d'Arc	*$1.25 net*
The Scarecrow	*$1.25 net*
Mater	*$1.25 net*
Sappho and Phaon	*$1.25 net*

By STEPHEN PHILLIPS

Nero	*$1.25 net*
Ulysses	*$1.25 net*
The Sin of David	*$1.25 net*

Poignant dramas which, according to the best critics, mark their author as the greatest writer of dramatic verse in England since Elizabethan times.

By STEPHEN PHILLIPS and J. COMYNS CARR

Faust	*$1.25 net*

PUBLISHED BY

THE MACMILLAN COMPANY

64-66 Fifth Avenue, New York

BY ARTHUR UPSON

The City (a drama) and Other Poems — *$1.25 net*

BY SARAH KING WILEY

Alcestis (a play) and Other Poems — *75 cents net*

The Coming of Philibert — *$1.25 net*

Mr. WILLIAM WINTER'S *Version of*

Mary of Magdala — *$1.25 net*

An adaptation from the original of Paul Heyse; used by Mrs. Fiske.

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS

Where there is Nothing — *Cloth, $1.25 net*
Limited large paper edition, $5.00 net

The Hour Glass and Other Plays — *$1.25 net*

In the Seven Woods — *$1.00 net*

NOTE.—Volume II. of the Collected Edition of Mr. Yeats' Poetical Works includes five of his dramas in verse: "The Countess Cathleen," "The Land of Heart's Desire," "The King's Threshold," "On Baile's Strand," and "The Shadowy Waters." *Cloth, $1.75 net*

BY WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS and Lady GREGORY

The Unicorn from the Stars, and Other Plays — *$1.50 net*

Attractively bound in decorated cloth.

BY ISRAEL ZANGWILL

Author of "Children of the Ghetto," etc.

The Melting-Pot — *Cloth, 12mo, $1.25 net*

PUBLISHED BY
THE MACMILLAN COMPANY
64-66 Fifth Avenue, New York

SAM HOUSTON STATE UNIVERSITY
0 2118 00618 0481

DATE DUE

GAYLORD			PRINTED IN U.S.A.

D-10002136006

Date Due

[redacted]

PS2427
.F3

Moody, W. V.

The faith healer.

PLASTIC BOOK BADGE MUST REMAIN IN POCKET AT ALL TIMES. A FEE WILL BE CHARGED IF BADGE IS LOST.